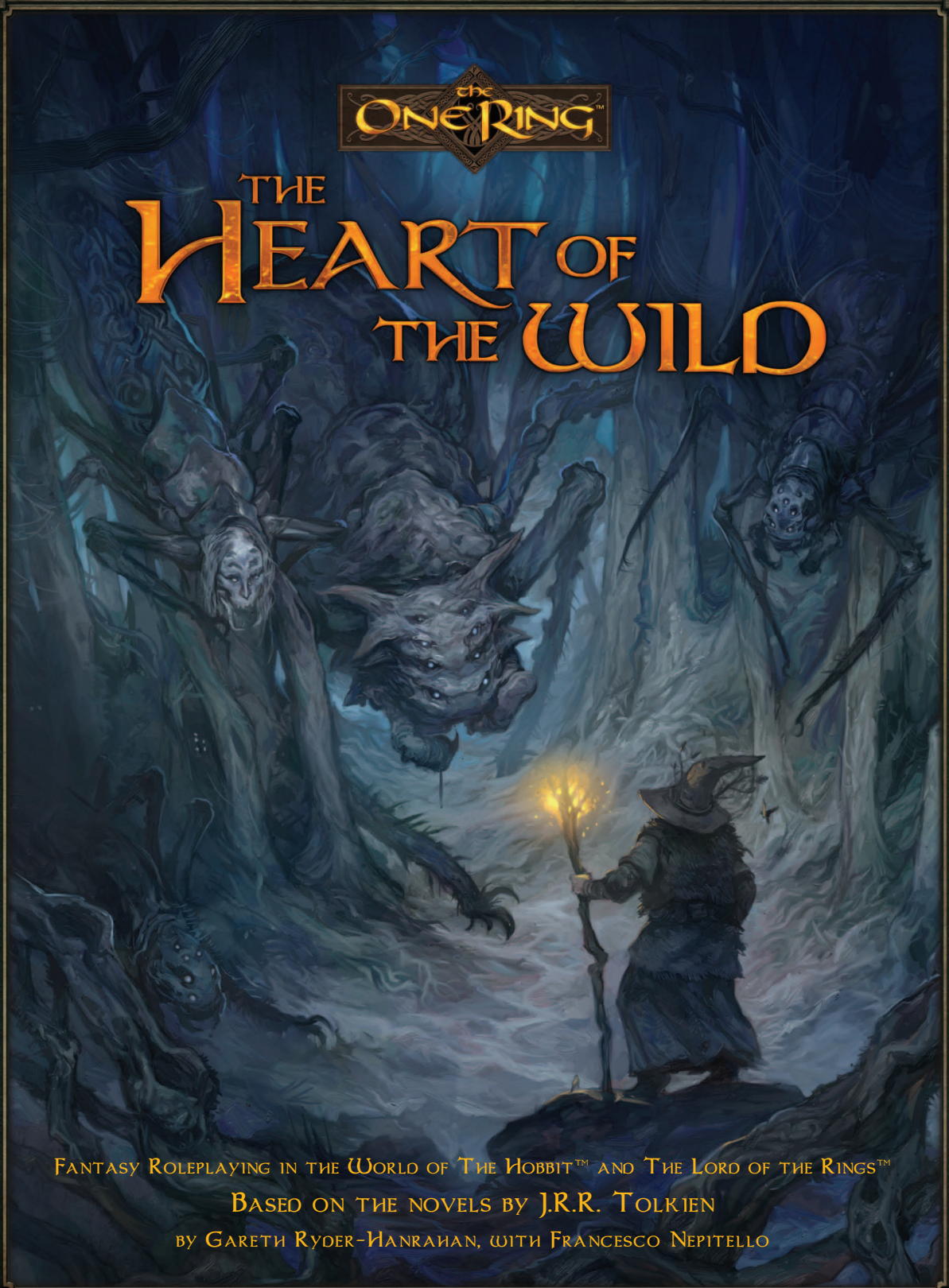

the One Ring™

The Heart of the Wild

Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of The Hobbit™ and The Lord of the Rings™

Based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien

by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, with Francesco Nepitello

- CREDITS -

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-Introduction-

The Heart of the Wild describes the lands of the River and the Forest — the Vales of Anduin along the banks of the Great River, and the trackless forest of Mirkwood to the east. It expands on the descriptions given in the *Loremaster's Guide*, offering new potential sanctuaries and new perils for the players to discover.

The majority of *The Heart of the Wild* is taken up with descriptions of the various regions (as demarcated in the Loremaster's Map). The first chapter follows the Anduin River down from the chill springs of the Misty Mountains to the southern edge of the Wild, visiting each region in turn. The second chapter explores the forest of Mirkwood, running from the thickets of Northern Mirkwood to the very gates of Dol Guldur.

Within those two chapters, each region is broken down according to the following scheme:

First, the region in general is described, noting its borders and its major features.

Secondly, any important flora or fauna are noted. Some regions of the Wild would make good farmland if they could be tamed; others are barren and hostile. Some places are home to all manner of dangerous beasts, others are desolate and haunted. In Mirkwood, the types of trees become of paramount importance, as there may be no landmarks other than a shift from oak to fir or thorn-trees.

Next, the region's inhabitants, if any, are described. In the Third Age of Middle-earth, much of the Wild is uninhabited by civilised folk, and a traveller may wander for long weeks without seeing another living soul. (Of course, just because the traveller does not see anyone does not mean there is no-one there.)

Fourth and fifth come the Notable People and Notable Places of the region. Notable People are exactly that — chieftains, leaders, monsters, Wizards, heroes — who might be allies or foes of the Company. Notable Places are a mix of important settlements or places of historical significance. Of course, the Loremaster may add or remove such people and places as he wishes — players who assume that everything that is seen here is true in their game may have nasty surprises awaiting them!

In certain regions, the Company may find new Fellowship Phase undertakings to try, or special challenges to overcome. Going off the road may be more rewarding — but also more perilous.

Chapter Three contains a Bestiary of the Wild, containing a host of new monsters and beasts, as well as several unique entities of great power and malice.

How to Use *The Heart of the Wild*

First and foremost, this guide is a gazetteer, a guide to the places and peoples of this part of Middle-earth. It is intended primarily for Loremasters, who can use this material to build their own adventures, or turn to it when the players unexpectedly go west instead of east and plunge into unknown territory. Players may also read this, but should only read those sections with which their characters would reasonably be familiar: a Dwarf of the Lonely Mountain has no business peering at the sections that describe the Heart of Mirkwood, unless that Dwarf has an exceptional **Travel** score and the *Mirkwood-Lore* trait!

The companion volume to this guide is a campaign entitled *The Darkening of Mirkwood*. This campaign covers the thirty-year period in which the Nazgûl return to Dol Guldur and the Shadow spreads over the forest once more. Many of the Loremaster characters and locations here described play key roles in that campaign. You don't need *The Darkening of Mirkwood* to use *The Heart of the Wild*, but you do need *The Heart of the Wild* to use *The Darkening of Mirkwood*.

The Passing of Years

The material presented in *The Heart of the Wild* assumes the year is 2946, five years after the Battle of Five Armies. As the years pass, the Loremaster should consider the effects of time on the various peoples and places. Old folk die, young brash heroes become wise chieftains, chieftains become old and toothless, and children grow up to become young brash heroes.

For the most part, of course, life continues in the Wild as it has done for hundreds of years, and the Elves do not notice the passing decades, but the Loremaster should still avoid a completely static setting. Consider *The Heart of the Wild* to be a snapshot of 'current events' in Wilderland, and build on this material as the years go by.

- the lands - of the River

"For Nimrodel flows into Silverlode, that the Elves call Celebrant, and Celebrant into Anduin the Great, and Anduin flows into the Bay of Belfalas when the Elves of Lórien set sail".

On and on the River Anduin flows, from its cold springs in the wastelands of the far north down to the warm lands of Gondor in the south. It runs for nearly five hundred leagues from source to mouth, and holds half the Wild in its mighty grasp.

Its northern part is named by some the White Anduin, because of its many rapids and fast current. South of the forest of Lórien it becomes the Green Anduin. Where the River plunges over the Falls of Rauros and joins with the waters of the Entwash it is called the Brown Anduin, and it is the Blue Anduin whence it passes the port of Pelargir in the southern lands of Gondor.

However, our tales do not take us there, for the full tale of the history of the Great River would be far longer than the river itself. For now, we consider only the region between Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains, lands known as the Vales of Anduin.

History of the Vales of Anduin

Anduin could be called the River of Men, as Men have thrived in the lands watered by it for many ages of the world. Few Elves ever settled along its banks — most of the Fair Folk crossed the river and continued west over the mountains; some lingered east in Mirkwood, and others stopped to dwell in the woods of Lórien, where the Silverlode flows into Anduin.

Dwarves have little love for the Great River. Its waters are too deep and fierce. They delight in underground rills, in fast-flowing mountain streams that can drive millwheels or be channelled into reservoirs and mirror-smooth lakes. Most of all, they love rivers that are shallow, for Dwarves cannot swim and have a great dread of drowning.

For Orcs and the other creatures of the Enemy, the Great River has long been a barrier. In the south, in Gondor, it girds the citadel of Minas Tirith, and the enemy dares not traverse it. In the north, the Goblins of the Misty Mountains avoid crossing the Anduin where possible. When they marched to war at the Battle of Five Armies, they went north around the springs of the river instead of passing over at the Old Ford.

Other, stranger folk know the river too. In Rohan and other places, tales are told of the Shepherds of the Trees who dwell in the Forest of Fangorn, and who, in ages past, would come down to the banks of the Anduin to drink its waters and listen to its song. It is said that the river brought tidings from the forests of the north to the Ents, carrying the words of mountain pines and ash.

Hobbits, too, once lived along the Great River. Few now remember them, save as creatures out of legend. The hole-builders dug into the sandy banks of the Nether Vales, and made their homes there. Some of these Hobbits migrated west over the Mountains, and eventually settled in the Shire. Others vanished into the Wild. Hobbits (even ones not wearing magic rings) are very good at going unseen when they want to, and wild Hobbits doubly so. There might still be Hobbits in the Wild, nervous and fearful as rabbits, hidden from the sight of Men and Elves alike.

The Men of the West

At the end of the Second Age, when the Men of the West escaped the wreck of Númenor, they came to the shores of Middle-earth and established their realms of Arnor and Gondor. At that time, the lands between the two were known as the Wild. The Dúnedain drew up plans to tame that vast expanse, to build roads and bridges and cities all along the banks of the Anduin, and to bring the wisdom of lost Westernesse to the Northmen who lived in the Vales. The ancestors of the Men of the West were kinsmen of these Northmen, and for a time the inhabitants of the Vales welcomed their distant cousins, and learned from them. In a happier world, perhaps all of the Wild might have united under the rule of the King, and all Men who are enemies of the One Enemy might have joined together in defiance of the Shadow. Sadly, there was not enough time, for Sauron returned to his stronghold in Mordor and once again planned to make war upon the surviving Dúnedain.

Elendil, the High King of Arnor and Gondor joined forces with Gil-galad, High King of the Elves, and their hosts marched south. In those days, the quickest route was along the Great River — they crossed over the Misty Mountains, then turned south. More warriors joined them on the way. Some were Dwarves of Moria, others were Men that came from the northern vales. Elves issued from Greenwood the Great and from the enchanted land of Lothlórien. They crossed the bridge that once spanned the Old Ford, then followed the river as it tumbled south, and passed out of sight beyond the Falls of Rauros.

Few of those who went south ever returned, for the battle against the Dark Lord was dreadful and bloody. The Alliance was victorious, but the victors' losses were so grievous that the grand designs the Men of Westernesse had for the Wild were abandoned, and in the ensuing centuries Wilderland reclaimed its name.

The Shadow of Dol Guldur

The Vales of Anduin enjoyed a thousand years of peace after the defeat of the Dark Lord, as the world entered its Third age. The Dwarves continued to toil in their mines, the Elves retreated to their forests, and Men lived and died along the river, their short lives passing like running water. Then, the Shadow fell on the forest: Greenwood the Great became Mirkwood, and men shunned it.

In time, Men began to hear rumours of a new power in the Wild. Travellers spoke of a Necromancer, a wizard who dwelt in the fortress of Dol Guldur. The lands between the black hold and the river fell under the sway of his forces, and the free folk retreated before this creeping menace.

The Necromancer's emissaries went out among the Northmen of the Vales, seeking out the greedy and fearful. These craven folk became his spies and agents, sent to play the clans and families against each other. Their mission was to foment kinstrife and war, to ensure that no alliance was ever strong enough to threaten Dol Guldur. At times, his servants would raid the Northmen, taking prisoners back to his dungeons, but the Necromancer never stretched out his hand to conquer the North. His eye was ever bent towards the Gladden Fields and the southern portions of the Anduin, for he sought his missing Ring.

The Northmen of Rhovanion

Men have settled in Wilderland since the First Age of the world. They lived then much as they do now, in small clans ruled by chieftains and warlords, living mostly along the eaves of the forest. But there has been a time when a Northman prince dared to proclaim himself the King of all Wilderland. Mere memories remain of his existence — the Northmen build no great cities, and in the Wild it is a rare thing for a kingdom to outlast the life of its king, but this prince of princes ruled over the wide plains between the forest and the River Running, and the barren expanse called the East Bight was carved out by the hunger for wood of his many subjects.

There was great friendship between this confederation of Northmen and the people of Gondor. The Northmen profited much from the dealings they had with the learned Men of the South, and made good guard over the northern frontiers of Gondor in return. They sometimes quarrelled with the Elves, and there was ever distrust between the tree-felling Northmen and the folk of the Wood. But the folk of the confederation never fell under the Shadow, despite the efforts of the Necromancer to bring them under his sway.

In 1635, plague came from the east. It fell hard upon Gondor and the south, but it was devastating to the Northmen: the Great Plague killed more than half of the folk of Rhovanion, shattering the strength of the confederation. Years later, the weakened Northmen retreated before the onslaught of enemies coming from the East, and were forced to abandon their lands. The East Bight was deserted, and today the ghosts of the Northmen haunting those areas greatly outnumber the living. The remnants of the once powerful confederation scattered in all directions. Some chose to go west, and returned to the lands between Mirkwood and the Great River.

The Horse-people

The clans of Northmen that returned to the Vales of Anduin finally settled in the lands between the river Gladden and the Carrock. There, they maintained their talents for horsemanship, for which the Northmen of Rhovanion were renowned, and called themselves the Éothéod, the horse-people. They also maintained their oaths of fealty sworn to the Men of Gondor, and together they fought bitter battles against the invaders from the East.

The Éothéod remained in the middle vales of Anduin for one hundred years, but eventually the shadow of Dol Guldur reached them. Those inhabitants of the vales who were serving the Enemy started to threaten their safety, and so the chieftains of the horse-people led them far north, to the very springs of the Great River in the Vales of Gundabad. There, they drove away tribes of evil Men and Goblins, and founded a great fortified town at the confluence of two rivers.

In that time, the Goblins of Mount Gundabad were still very numerous and warlike. Often, they left their hiding places by means of secret tunnels and hidden paths and attacked the newcomers. Dragons, too, and other creatures beset the new Northman nation. Those were days of high adventure, when heroes pitted steel and sinew against the horrors that crawled out of the mountain roots. The Éothéod survived these early trials, and grew strong.

The Dark Years

Around the same time that the Éothéod went north, Durin's Bane awoke in Moria. The great city of the Dwarves was abandoned, and became the abode of evil things. The Dwarves retreated west and east. Some travelled to their mines in the Blue Mountains, far across the land of Eriador, others to the Iron Hills. Durin's heirs built their new kingdom of Erebor, the Lonely Mountain, and the iron-shod boots of the Dwarves rang no longer on the Old Forest Road.

Reinforced by the darkening of Moria, the power of Dol Guldur grew strong. For the first time, men spoke openly of the Necromancer, and his dread shadow extended over the Vales of Anduin. The lands from the Old Ford to the borders of Lórien were within the grasp of his black hand, and many Men who lived in the Vales started to pay tribute to the Hill of Sorcery. The Necromancer did not ask openly for their allegiance, but any who refused to bow before his emissaries were beset by all manner of foes. Ghosts out of Dol Guldur inhabited the barrows and tombs; Orcs were seen along the forest eaves, and the passes and paths over the Misty Mountains were infested by Goblins and Wargs.

In the year 2063 of the Third Age, the wizard Gandalf came to Dol Guldur. The Shadow departed, and the land was freed from the Necromancer's evil. The ghosts hid in dark crannies under the ground, and the Orcs retreated to their caverns. The Elves emerged from their Woodland Realm, and many Northmen settled under the eaves of the forest, in the new sanctuary they called Woodmen-town.

A Land without Kings

This 'Watchful Peace' lasted for four hundred years. In that time, only the Woodmen living inside the forest and in the deep valleys along the foothills of the Misty Mountains managed to profit from the shadow's departure, and multiplied. Those Northmen who inhabited the middle vales of the Great River and who bowed to the Necromancer dwindled in number. But the Woodmen didn't dare claim the territories of the oathbreakers, as they were considered tainted and cursed. So the memory of their dark allegiance endured in their households, preserved in bitter songs sung for the ruin of the West.

So it was that when the Necromancer returned to his fortress in 2460, spies and servants were soon abroad once again, and there was strife among the Northmen of the vales and the Woodmen. When messengers from Gondor travelled up the river in the year 2510 looking for help in their wars, they encountered a land that was vastly deserted. Among the inhabitants of the Vales of Anduin, only the Éothéod could answer — they rode out of the north led by their chieftain, Eorl the Young, and won a great victory in the Field of Celebrant. In return for their heroism, the Steward of Gondor granted the horse-people the southern land of Calenardhon. Eorl the Young led his entire folk south to live there, so the Éothéod passed out of the Annals of the North.

With the departure of the Éothéod went the last strong ruler west of the Forest and east of the Mountains. Among the Northmen of the Vales there was no voice that could unite the clans, no leader to rally the disparate houses. Had the Necromancer wished, he could easily have conquered their scattered homesteads.

Defeating mortal Men, though, was of no concern to the dread lord. His Eye was ever bent south and west upon his ancient foes — the Dúnedain of Gondor and the Elves of Lórien and Rivendell. All his schemes depended on the defeat of these strongholds. Therefore, he bided his time for several decades and built up his forces in preparation for a return to his old fastness of Mordor.

The River-folk of the Anduin

The history of the Vales of Anduin is a history of migration. The Northmen were driven up and down the river over the centuries. They fled overcrowding, famine and plague; they fled harsh winters or the drought of summers, the powers of darkness and the machinations of the Necromancer.

The ancestors of the horse-folk, for example, moved from the Vales to the East Bight, from the Bight back to the southern Vales, from the south to the sources of Anduin, and from there to the plains of Calenardhon where they became the Rohirrim. Similarly, the ancestors of the Woodmen travelled from region to region until they settled in the safety of Mirkwood and in the dales along the Misty Mountains to the east.

Some denizens of the Vales never settled at all. Called the *éafolc* ("River-folk") by the Beornings and the Woodmen, these Men come of mixed stock; they count the forefathers of the Woodmen among their ancestors, but their blood is mingled with that of wandering wild men akin to the Dunlendings. The éafolc spend most of the year on the water, living on house-barges that wallow along the Anduin. They do build houses on stilts and piles sunk into the mud of the riverbank, but these are only temporary dwellings and vanish after a few years. They do not farm, but survive by fishing, hunting, gathering and trading; the river is their home, their road, their larder and their defence against their foes.

The West Anduin Vales is where they are most often encountered, but they paddle as far north as the Vales of Gundabad, and as far south as Nen Hithoel above the Falls of Rauros on little boats. Their houseboats — barges big enough for a whole family, including provisions and livestock — are much slower and less agile, and often must be hauled with ropes from the riverbanks when going upstream, and so rarely stray beyond the safe waters between the Old Ford and the borders of the haunted Golden Wood.

River-folk traders have a reputation as untrustworthy tricksters, and certainly they try to pawn off worthless 'magic charms' and broken knick-knacks if they can. However, most of their trade goods are of good quality. They bring furs, amber and timber from the north of the Great River, and carry wine, meat and iron tools from the south.

The Men of the Anduin Vales

In the following centuries, the Vales of Anduin became once again wild and dangerous. Outlaws and servants of the Necromancer travelled the overgrown paths, and the few surviving Northmen not under the shadow jealously guarded their homesteads and forts and mistrusted their neighbours. Civilised folk no longer spoke of the North, but called it only Wilderland. When the Long Winter of 2758 struck the North, those who lived along the Great River were not prepared and many families froze to death. Many more turned to the Necromancer's servants for aid — even the proudest Northman would think hard when faced with a choice between starving to death and serving Dol Guldur.

By the year 2900, the Northmen of Wilderland were scattered and divided. The largest communities were gathered under the four main Houses of the Woodmen. They dwelt in the forest's eaves inside their fenced villages of Woodmen-town and Woodland Hall, or near the house of Radagast the Brown at Rhosgobel, and in the deep valleys east of the Misty Mountains around Mountain Hall.

Along the banks of the Great River other Northmen lived as their forefathers had for many years, in isolated and self-sufficient farmsteads. Most of these folk dwelt in the southern Vales, beyond Lórien on the fringes of Fangorn Forest and Rohan, but they began to migrate north. They skirted the baleful lands of the Necromancer and began to settle west of the Anduin. They mingled with the few residents of the middle vales, and met those few corrupt men who fell under the shadow of Dol Guldur and were secretly or openly servants of the Necromancer.

Recent Years

In the year 2941, a number of events affected Wilderland profoundly. Bard the Bowman killed Smaug the Dragon, and the number of Goblins and Orcs plaguing the region was severely reduced at the Battle of Five Armies.

When Beorn the Skinchanger returned to his stead, he seemed fired with new purpose. That autumn, he visited all the farmsteads that lay within three days march of his home, and declared them to be under his protection. The people within that region acclaimed Beorn as their chieftain, and he seemed willing to accept this honour. Now, the folk who live around the Carrock are called the Beornings, and they hold the Old Ford and the lands around it.

Some time before the Battle of Five Armies, the White Council drove the Necromancer out of Mirkwood. The Shadow has not yet lifted entirely from Mirkwood, but its power is much diminished. Those who served Dol Guldur are now either dispersed or freed from his dark influence; in either case, there is adventure to be had in the Anduin Vales.

Now, five years after the Dragon's death, Beorn and the chieftains of the Woodmen joined with the folk of Dale, the Kingdom under the Mountain and the Woodland Realm at the first Council of the North. They swore friendship and pacts of trade and mutual defence — a first step in restoring civilisation to the Wild.

Boat-Spirits

Some of the house-boats of the éafolc are home to a curious race of friendly spirits. These boat-spirits are rarely seen, as they are incredibly skilled at hiding. They resemble human children, standing only two or three feet tall, and dress in green and brown clothes. The boat-spirits come out at night and magically complete chores on the boats — a River-folk family might awaken to find all their ropes neatly coiled and stacked, their boots polished, the deck swept, and a delicious breakfast cooking on a campfire by the riverbank. Of course, the spirits demand a price — the River-folk protect them and leave out plates of food for them each evening (and a bottle of wine or three would not go amiss either).

Only the larger house-barges have boat-spirits; some barges are even said to have several such entities. Boat-spirits are long-lived, and can haunt the same family for decades.

Regions of the Vales of Anduin

...below them were trees that looked like oaks and elms, and wide grass lands, and a river running through it all.

The Vales of Anduin comprise the regions along the banks of the Great River, as it flows between Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains. These areas extend from the river's source in the Grey Mountains to the borders of Lórien.

Elements of Landscape

The Vales encompass a vast sweep of territory, covering many hundreds of miles, and the river passes many different lands and peoples. Still, some traits remain true all along the river's path. The Loremaster may refer to the following traits when describing the landscape encountered along the Great River.

Emptiness

War, plague and despair have emptied this land. Few people now dwell in Wilderland, and those who remain are clustered in a few isolated places. A traveller can march across the countryside for weeks and not meet a single living soul. Unless a traveller deliberately seeks out places where people dwell, he is unlikely to meet anyone on his travels.

But, though Wilderland is empty, it was not always the case. Men, Dwarves and Elves lived here, and traced paths, tracks and roads, built bridges, stockades and towers, most of which are now utterly ruined and forgotten. Carved stones and other relics can be found in the most unlikely places.

Savagery

This is the Wild. There is little shelter here. No inns, few settlements, fewer villages, and even fewer friendly faces. When the north wind howls in winter, the snow blankets the whole land from the Vales of Gundabad to the Middle Vales. Beasts and monsters prowl the countryside, and bands of Orcs come down from the mountains to raid and pillage. Those who dwell in this land must be tough and cold-hearted to survive. The Wild can be cruel and savage.

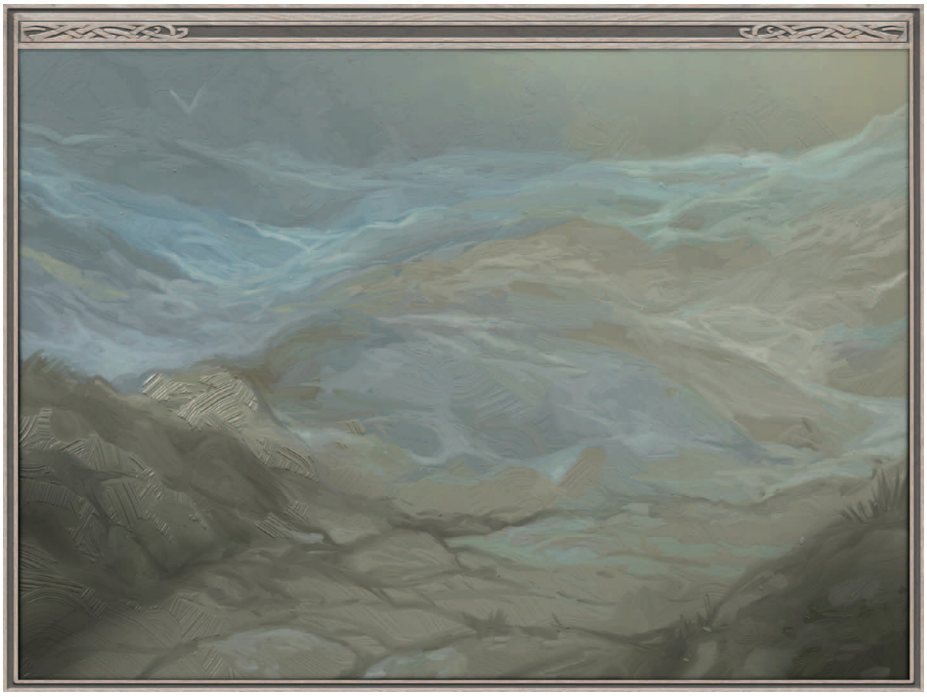
Strange Magic

Not even the Wise know all the secrets of the Vales of Anduin. There is magic here that even Elves do not know, echoes of strange music caught in the mountains and valleys. Unexpected and bizarre things dwell between the Mountains and the Forest.

Travelling along the Vales of Anduin

The great part of the territories between Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains that are traversed by the Great River are not too difficult to journey across. Paths old and new and wide plains make travel along the Middle Vales easy, especially to the east of the river.

Companions possessing the Trait Anduin-lore may invoke it to automatically succeed at the LORE roll needed to plan a journey.



Vales of Gundabad

The Vales of Gundabad refers to the triangle of land between two rivers. Langwell rises in the Misty Mountains and tumbles south-east to meet the Greylin, whose source is in the Grey Mountains. Combined, they form Anduin the Great. Where the Misty Mountains and the Grey meet, Mount Gundabad rises. Its grim face stares down the vales from the north. In the past, the land between the rivers used to be called the Gore of Anduin, although this phrase has fallen out of use since the Northmen left this region.

The Vales can be a cold land. Cruel winds and snows whip off the northern mountains in winter, while spring and summer bring heavy rains from the west, as clouds cross the gap in the mountains above the Long Valley and disgorge an ocean of rain. This water pours down the steep, jagged rocks of the valley in a series of thunderous waterfalls, and thence into a thousand small streams. The vales watered by these streams turn green in the spring with grass and thistles, while the basin near the junction of the rivers is a fertile flood plain.

At times, especially in autumn, thick fogs roll down the hills and the whole Vale vanishes behind a grey cloak. The Goblins go hunting when these fogs descend. The central portion of the Vales of Gundabad is a land of thinly wooded hills that recede endlessly into the grey mists. This is a lonely land, haunted by evil spirits and wild men. Travel through those cold, depressing hills and you find yourself on the goblin-road that leads to Mount Gundabad.

Wildlife

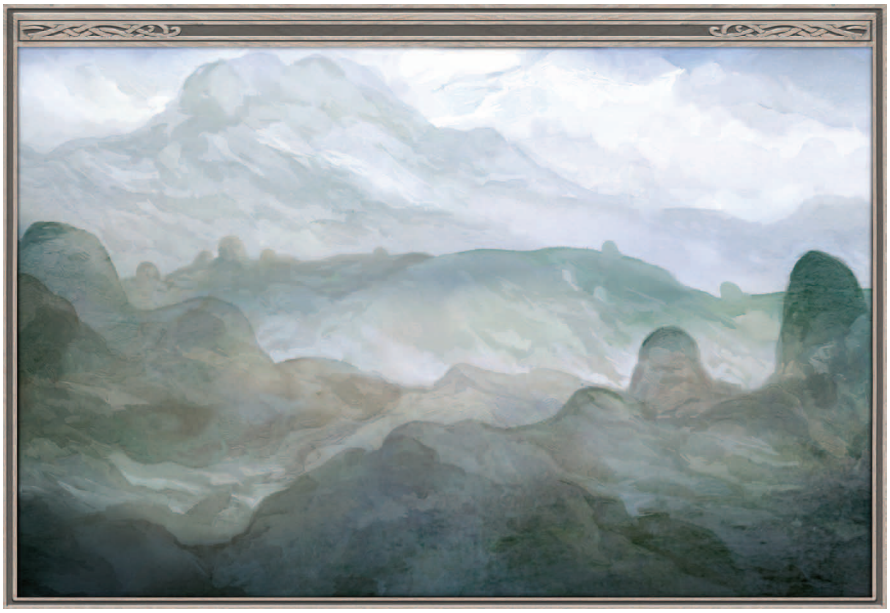
The mountain valleys are home to goats, pine martens and rabbits as well as many birds. A few wild horses and thin-bellied cattle can still be encountered in the lower vales, although the hunger of the Goblins spares only a few of these animals. The wild horses of the Vales of Gundabad are especially prized, as they descend from the steeds of the Éothéod. Beavers and kingfishers live along the rivers; pike and trout may be found in the waters themselves.

An outcrop of wooded hills, called the Black Hills, are the hunting ground of many packs of wild wolves. Somewhere in those hills is the fabled Werewolf Hollow, where the oldest and most powerful Wargs are said to dwell. Ancient songs tell of ruins haunted by beasts that walk on two legs or four, and of red eyes burning in the night.

Inhabitants

The Dwarves do not speak of it, but certain legends claim that their first halls lie beneath the roots of Mount Gundabad, and that Durin the Deathless awoke there when the world was young. If there are Dwarven tunnels beneath the mountain, then the Goblins took them long ago, for Mount Gundabad has been an Orc stronghold since time immemorial. These Orcs were the allies of Angmar hundreds of years ago, and they marched to fight in the Battle of Five Armies after the death of the Dragon.

When the Éothéod lived here, they slew many Orcs and evil Men and drove the rest underground or into the hills. Then, they built a fortress at the confluence of the two rivers, and left the uplands to the Goblins and the wild men.



When the Northmen left the region to settle in the land of Calenardhon, a few of them remained behind, but they could not fully man their stronghold and the fortress slowly fell into ruin. They were eventually forced to move south into the Upper Vales of Anduin, where they mingled with the local cottars and lost their mastery of riding. Of that proud nation of Northmen only a few hardy survivors remain, living as trappers and hunters.

Goblins innumerable live in the tunnels under the mountains, so vast is their network. It is said that a Goblin can run on his flapping feet from Mount Gundabad all the way to the Withered Heath in the East, or to Mount Gram in the West, or to tall Methedras in the far South, the last peak of the Misty Mountains, without ever poking his nose above ground. These paths lead through many secret ways, through carved tunnels and natural caves, through Goblin dens and the abandoned halls of the Dwarves, and through the worm-borings of nameless things and the lairs of dragons.

The Hill-men of Gundabad

A few scattered tribes of wild Men live in the Black Hills. They are the descendants of an evil folk, subject to the dark kingdom of Angmar, who crossed into Wilderland from Eriador at the time of the Witch-king. When the Éothéod moved into the Vale of Gundabad, they hunted these Men mercilessly, as the Northmen accused them of being workers of sorcery. They escaped extinction by learning to hide in the hills, and under them, using the network of goblin-tunnels dug under the Vale. When the folk of Eorl left these regions, the surviving Hill-men emerged from their dens and started to multiply again. Today, they are a primitive and savage folk, weakened by centuries of interbreeding and by their dealings with the Goblins and Wargs. They seldom leave their refuges under the hills, and never go far from them, as they do not dare to cross the rivers for their deathly fear of water.

Sorcery of the Hill-men

The wild men of the Black Hills have forgotten much of the sorcery their ancestors were reputed to wield, but they all still speak the language of Wargs and some among them even have the power to leave their physical bodies while sleeping at night, to prowl the land in spirit form. A gift that is much akin to that of some Beornings, it lets a hill-man go to great distances in the form of a large wild wolf, to carry messages, to spy upon his enemies, and even to poison food and water supplies. Should it be killed, the body of a spirit-wolf dissolves before the dawn, leaving no trace. (See also the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

When the Horse-people dwelt in this land, the Goblins dared not trespass on the green earth, and instead dug their tunnels beneath the ground. Over five hundred years, they drew ever closer to the fortress of the Horse-folk, until they could assail it from below.

Notable Characters

Amfossa the Trapper

A few hardy trappers live along the Greylin River, hunting the beavers and stoats for their fur, which they trade with the Beornings. Amfossa is the leader and spokeswoman for these trappers. She is a tall, powerfully-built woman with eyes that seem blue or green or brown depending on the light. To hear talk the wives of the other trappers, the passing years do not leave their mark on her, suggesting she must have Elvish blood in her. She is an excellent shot with the hunting bow she always carries.

Amfossa lives alone near the meeting point of the rivers. She has a shack built on wooden stilts by the bank, where she meets with River-folk traders — as well as other, stranger visitors. Beorn himself has been known to travel north to consult with her, and Gandalf and Radagast are not strangers to her house.

Should the companions gain the hospitality of Amfossa and be invited to enter her shack, they would be surprised to find it is actually very comfortable, and larger than it seems from the outside. If the heroes spend a night as guests of Amfossa, they will wake up the next morning as if they slept on soft pillows rather than on sleeping cots. In particular, wounded companions feel as if their pain has been washed away by the running waters of the river, and regain Endurance as if they were uninjured.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Swimming, Anduin-lore
Distinctive Features: Elusive, Patient, Trusty
Relevant skills: Hunting ♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦, Bow ♦♦♦
Endurance: 30

Hwalda, Hill-man Guide

Hwalda is one of the wild folk of the Vales of Gundabad. She is actually of mixed blood, born of a Northman hunter and a Hill-man mother. She is capable of leaving her body as a spirit-warg, but unlike most of her kin she has travelled beyond the natural boundary of the two rivers and has no love for the Goblins and the wild wolves of the vales, as they killed her father when she was young.

Hwalda's journeys have taken her west over the Misty Mountains, in search of a dark fortress she often sees in her dreams, and as far south as the Carrock. She wears a warg-hide cloak, and carries a sword of dwarf-forged steel looted from some ancient grave. She can be a guide or interpreter for those who seek treasure in the Vales of Gundabad, or for those looking for the Lost Watchtower (see page 18).

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Enemy-lore, Woodwright
Distinctive Features: Suspicious, Wary
Relevant skills: Hunting ♦♦♦, Explore ♦♦♦, Sword ♦♦
Endurance: 15

The Steed of the Moon

Minstrels and Loremasters tell the tale of how Eorl the Young tamed Felaróf, first of the *mearas*, the great horses of Rohan, when his people still dwelt in the Gore of Anduin. The Steed of the Moon is a wild white horse that must be akin to the fabled steed of Eorl, for he runs faster than the wind and is as beautiful as a moonrise over the forest. Many hunters have tried to catch and tame the Steed, but none have succeeded. Thranduil the Elf-King has made it known that he desires the Steed of the Moon, and has offered a rich reward to anyone who captures the peerless horse.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Taming the Steed of the Moon

Catching the Steed of the Moon is a matter for an adventure. Taming it, though, takes a whole Fellowship Phase.

To tame the steed, the companion must have a total of at least 12 skill ranks among ATHLETICS, AWE, INSPIRE and HUNTING. If a companion does not have the required total, he may attempt to add to his total by making a Valour or Wisdom roll, adding one point with a normal success, two points on a great success, and three points on an extraordinary success. If the character's total now matches or exceeds 12, he has tamed the horse this year.

Once the horse is tamed, then the hero may ride the Steed of the Moon:

- When on a journey, the TRAVEL skill of the rider is increased by 2, and is always considered as Favoured.
- When the rider is travelling alone, the Steed allows him to cover 80 miles per day (instead of 40).
- If the hero is in the Vales of Anduin, the Steed is never far away. The rider may call the Steed to him, no matter where he is. (The Steed still has to travel to the rider, but it knows that it is needed).

Gorgol, son of Bolg

Bolg, son of Azog, ruled the Orcs of the Mountains from his capital of Gundabad for many years, until Beorn slew him at the Battle of Five Armies. Now, many warlords contend for Bolg's throne, and there is civil war and treachery beneath the ground. One likely heir is Bolg's eldest son, Gorgol. He fought in the battle, but fled when Beorn charged. Gorgol and his followers were driven east by the Eagles, and forced to retreat into the Withered Heath. It took him six years to return home to Gundabad, and by then he had few remaining followers and could not force his claim to his father's throne.

The 'Goblin prince' is still young as years are reckoned by his kind, and has not yet come into the fullness of his awful strength. He wields the scimitar of his father, which was forged in Carn Dûm by dark smiths and was bound with spells by the Witch-king himself. The scimitar is notched where Beorn's claws knocked it from Bolg's grip, but its strength is undiminished. (See Gorgol's description in the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

If Gorgol is to become ruler of the Goblin warrens under Gundabad, then he must rally more followers. The only ways to do that are to either have the blessing of the Dark Lord himself, or to make war upon the enemies of goblin-kind. At midwinter on the year of his return, Gorgol murdered one of his rivals with his father's sword and daubed nine names onto the wall behind his father's throne, nine enemies of the Orcs he has sworn to kill. One — Thorin Oakenshield, who killed the Great Goblin — is already dead. The names of King Dáin Ironfoot and Beorn are assuredly there too. Only the denizens of Gundabad know for certain who the other six are, but Gorgol will not rest until they have all perished.

Nagrhaw, Chief of the Wargs

Nagrhaw is the great grey wolf who was the chief of the Wargs that chased Gandalf and the Dwarves up the

trees. He survived the encounter with the wizard and fought in the Battle of Five Armies, although his nose is still blackened from Gandalf's fiery pine-cone, and his flanks are scarred with elf-arrows and dwarf-swords. He eventually made his lair in the Werewolf Hollow in the Black Hills, although he ranges far when he hunts. Since the Battle of Five Armies he has not dared cross the Great River again — the Eagles keep a watch on him, and attack him on sight.

Nagrhaw is a devilishly cunning beast, with a better grasp of tactics than most Orc-chieftains. He has the instincts of the wolf; he knows when to wait in ambush and when to strike, when to harass and when to go for the kill. He knows the value of intelligence and informants, and many of the meaner creatures of Wilderland — the wolves, the weasels, the crows and the serpents — are his spies. (See Nagrhaw's description in the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

Nagrhaw's support could decide the victor in the struggles beneath Mount Gundabad. Ancient bonds of malice and evil unite the Goblins and the Wargs, and the chief of the Wargs could be kingmaker in the North.

Notable Places

The City of the Éothéod

The largest and northernmost fortress of the Éothéod was first built on a large stone outcrop overlooking the rivers to the south. Deep cellars were dug into the rock to keep stores, and tall ramparts surrounded the stronghold. Soon, the town surrounding it expanded onto the muddy ground north and west, as the horse-folk became more and more numerous.

Today, only tumbled piles of stones and grassy fields pockmarked with post-holes remain — most of the fortification was built using trees brought from the eaves of Northern Mirkwood.

The city's earthen ramparts and protective ditches can still clearly be seen, as can the hollow ruins of the few stone structures that the Éothéod built with the help of stonemasons from the South. Orcs and Trolls dwell among the ruins; they use the city as a staging post for raids across the river. Long ago, they looted the tombs of the Éothéod, and many treasures of the horse-people are now piled up in the dungeons of Gundabad, or stored in hidden troll-caves.

Forgotten Treasures

According to ancient legend, Gítsere was a lord of the Éothéod who hid his fortune in a huge wooden chest with a carven lid before riding to battle. He never returned from the Field of Celebrant to enjoy the sight of his pale gems and gold, and so his hoard may still be buried somewhere in a secret treasury underground, behind strong iron-bound doors.

The skull of Scatha the Worm may also still rest among the ruins of the High Hall of the city. A long-worm of the Grey Mountains, Scatha was killed by Fram, whose name is remembered in many songs. He was the son of Frumgar, the chieftain who originally led the horse-people to the Vales of Gundabad.

The Hidden House

When Fram slew the long-worm Scatha, Dwarves from the Grey Mountains hastened to the camps of the Éothéod to press their claim. They argued that the hoard of Scatha came from the dwarf-halls that the dragon had previously despoiled, and that they were therefore entitled to the greater part of the recovered treasure. The Éothéod refused them, and Fram sent the Dwarves a necklace of dragon's teeth, claiming that these were rarer jewels than anything in the hoard. The Dwarves tore at their beards and contemplated making war upon the horse-people. In the end, cooler heads prevailed, although the Dwarves did swear long oaths of vengeance.

Some Dwarves, though, refused to abandon their claim. They went north to the hills, and there built the Hidden House, Bar-en-Thurin, a cunningly concealed fortress beneath a grey hill. There, they watched the horse-people and plotted how to steal their treasure back. Greed and madness consumed them before they resolved to act, and they perished.

The Hidden House still exists, somewhere beneath the trackless hills. Thrain II wintered there before besieging Mount Gundabad during the War of the Dwarves and Orcs, and dwarf travellers use the Hidden House as a waystation. Parts of the underground fortress, though, are unsafe, and no-one knows what dwells in the lower halls. Certainly, the Casket of Hate that contains the Necklace of Scatha is lost somewhere within the Hidden House.

The Hill of Skulls

The Hill of Skulls is a familiar feature to those who travel in the western part of the Gore. It stands a little way away from other hills, a lonely mound visible for miles. Hundreds of wooden stakes bristle on its flanks, and every one has a skull impaled on it. Most are Orc-skulls and Warg-skulls, but others belonged to Men or Dwarves. There are even a few huge skulls that must belong to Giants.

While most of the grisly trophies are clearly very old, there have been travellers who swear they have spotted fresher heads staked on the side of the mound from time to time. No one knows who is responsible for the gruesome decorations; what is certain is that the hill is not a natural formation, and is indeed hollow. It might be a barrow, but what lies buried, or hidden, under it no one is in a hurry to discover.

The Lost Watchtower

About a thousand years ago, the armies of Angmar completed the destruction of the North-kingdom of Arnor, but were soon in their turn vanquished by an alliance of Elves and Men at the Battle of Fornost. After defeating the armies of the Witch-king, the allies continued on to break the power of Angmar and scatter its allies. Like a bright spear, they thrust east, even across the mountains and unto the very gates of Mount Gundabad. The Orcs fled into the darkness below the earth, and dared not emerge for many years.

To secure their victory, the Men of Gondor built a watchtower to stand vigil. The fortification was built in sight of the gates of Gundabad, atop a narrow and unassailable spur against the east side of the mountains. Beneath it were cellars and wells enough to feed an army, but the tower could be defended against a huge host of attackers by just a handful of doughty warriors.

At first, the outpost was manned by survivors of the kingdom of Arnor, but as the long years rolled by, the men of Gondor gave custody of the tower to the Éothéod. When the riders too left this land, the keys to the tower were given to a vassal house who dwelt across the river in the West Upper Vales. What fate befell them, history does not recall.

If the Watchtower were found and manned once again, then it would be a major obstacle for the Orcs of Gundabad to overcome. For this to happen, though, some hero would have to find the Watchtower and also locate the missing keys to its gates, and those keys were lost hundreds of years ago.

Grey Mountains Narrows

The region known as the Grey Mountains Narrows is a long strip of land separating Mirkwood from the Grey Mountains. It extends for more than sixty leagues, from the riverbanks of the Greylin to the west, to the flat Dalelands to the east. While the region is from twenty to thirty miles wide for most of its length, it tapers to little more than ten miles where the mountains and the forest almost meet, at its opposing ends — known as the Narrows' East and West Gaps.

The slopes of the Grey Mountains are an inhospitable waste. Before the Battle of Five Armies crushed the might of the Goblins in the North, the area was described as simply stiff with the likes of them. Now it offers a safer alternative to the dreadful pathways under the trees for those who need to get across the width of Mirkwood, but it remains a dangerous and cheerless land. Barren and very cold in winter, its climate is made only slightly more bearable by the protection offered by the mountain range itself, as the rocky barrier shields the area from the fury of the northern winds.

Near the region's western Gap, just beyond the Forest River, the hills grow taller, rising to meet a great spur of the Grey Mountains that bends round to the south-west. At the feet of the rocky spur, a winding trail crosses the

gap from the south. It is a trading road, a long path that meanders among the stony hills and the dales of the Narrows, cutting across the length of Wilderland. Kept in good repair for many long years, this grey road saw traffic decline dramatically after the coming of Smaug, and the stone bridge that used to cross the Forest River collapsed during the Fell Winter of 2911 — today, its raging waters can only be crossed safely further away from the mountains, where the river enters Mirkwood; here, the stream runs both swift and deep, but its banks are lined with trees, and travellers can use ropes to get across.

As the road travels east, the landscape becomes harsher. The bare hills diminish in size and dot the land like innumerable barrows. Travellers on the road feel the strength of the winds rise, as cold currents from the Withered Heath blow against them, and dust clouds rising from the Waste to the east darken the light of the sun.

After miles and miles of bleak, lonely countryside, the road finally reaches the East Gap of the Narrows, to then turn southwards into the Northern Dalelands; the Dalelands were once known as the Desolation of Smaug; several years after the death of the Dragon, the region is once again a green and pleasant land, tilled and rich.

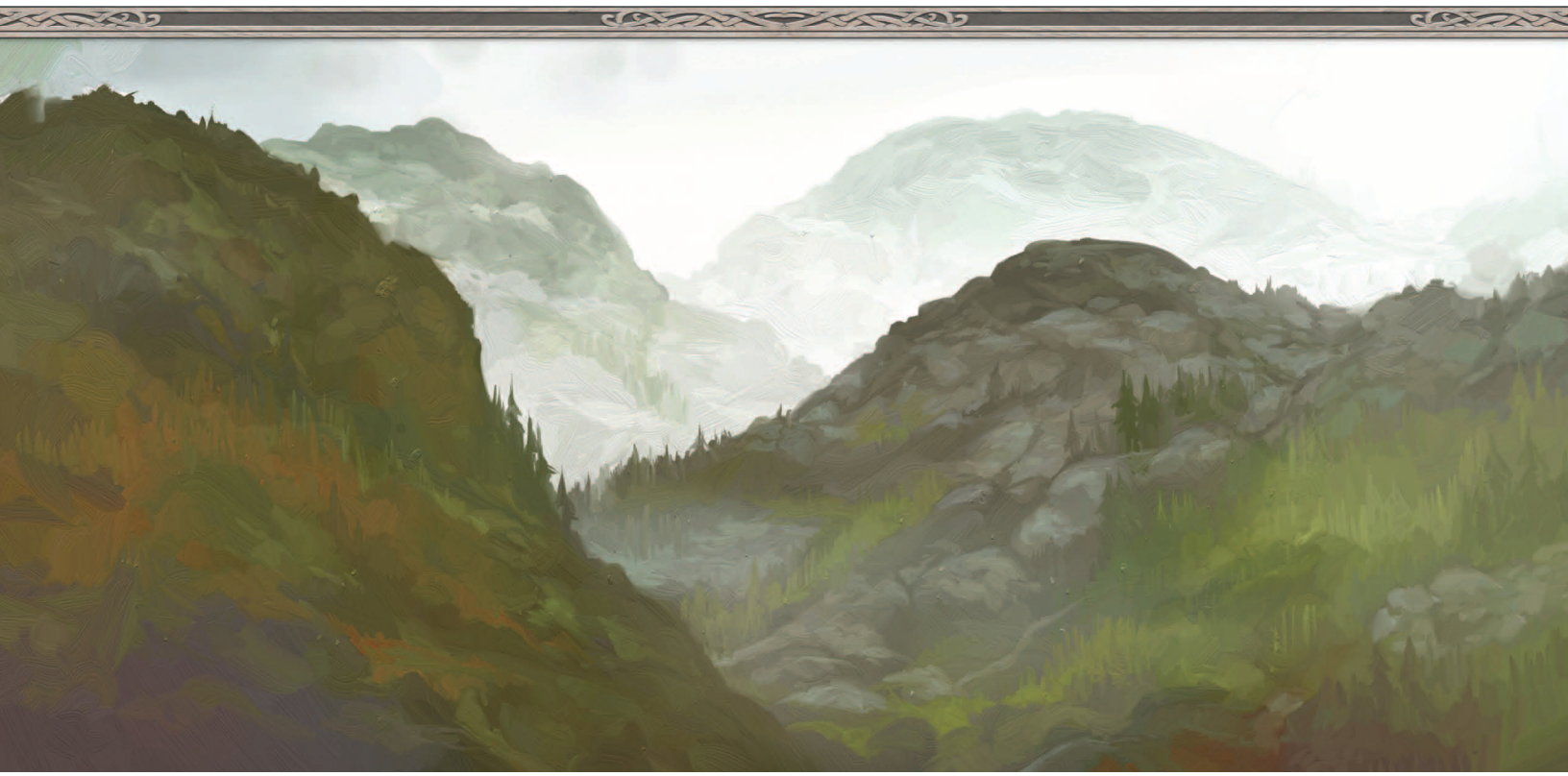
Wildlife

Strangely, the desolate Narrows are not wholly deserted of life. Many birds, mainly ravens and crows, roost under the eaves of Mirkwood and in the mountain dales; they take to the skies in large flocks when disturbed, breaking the silence of the land with their caws and squawks. Wolves prowl the hills, ranging from the foothills of the mountains to threaten any traffic along the road. Now that the path across the Narrows sees more use once again, these canny animals have learned to avoid groups of armed warriors and to approach lonely wanderers instead.

Wolves and other wicked creatures also tend not to stray too far south, as they learned the hard way that getting too close to the borders of Mirkwood is likely to attract the attention of the Silvan Elves — and the Elvenking does not suffer trespassers gladly. In fact, experienced travellers know that around the Woodland Realm it is safer to make camp closer to the forest than far from it, contrary to what common sense might suggest.

Inhabitants

In years past, the Dwarves delved into the Grey Mountains in search of wealth. These delvings were never as wealthy as Erebor or Moria, but there was iron to be found in



abundance, as well as other useful metals and good stone. One by one, these holds fell to Dragons, or to Orcs, or to other nameless foes, and drove the Dwarves from the region. Most of the refugees went east to the Lonely Mountain and the Iron Hills, or west to the Blue Mountains, but a small number remained stubbornly here. These survivors live in shacks or small tunnels dug under the tall hills around the West Gap, or in the heights extending out of Mirkwood. They dare not trespass into the woods, as the Elves of the Woodland Realm bear them little love. Travellers can find shelter here: though the Dwarves begrudge every moment of hospitality they offer, they offer it nonetheless.

No other established communities of Men, Elves or Dwarves exist around the West Gap or the middle regions of the Narrows; those areas were plagued for too long by creatures out of Mount Gundabad or coming from beyond the Grey Mountains. Even if the number of Orcs and other evil creatures haunting the foothills of the Grey Mountains were severely reduced at the Battle of Five Armies, there are still many other wild things that may threaten travellers. In particular, a breed of cannibalistic monsters called Hobgoblins hide in deep caverns to the north, while Snow-Trolls are known to hunt in these areas, when storms blanket the hills with snow and ice.

The East Gap of the Narrows was a borderland, the frontier of old kingdoms of the North, once inhabited by march-wardens and their vassals. Ruined watchtowers crown the hilltops overlooking the road like many rings of standing stones, while farmsteads still stand intact, but empty and silent. These barns and wooden halls were occupied until a few years ago by Northmen who only left these lands to gather to Dale after the death of the Dragon. Now, they are mostly used by those who must cross the Narrows on

A Campfire Tale

Companions making camp in one of the ruins atop the hills of the East Gap might encounter Farmann one night. He appears out of nowhere, climbing the hillside on his silent horse, unheeded by any watchman or sentinel. He appears to be a hoary old warrior, haggard-looking and wearing a weather-beaten cloak. Farmann hails any Northman or Dwarf warmly, bows respectfully in front of an Elf, but seems completely oblivious to the presence of any Hobbit. Once introduced to the company, Farmann dismounts and quietly sits beside the fire, rubbing his hands close to the flame. Then, he gives his warning: maybe there's a storm coming, or a stream to be crossed safely at a certain location, or a den of particularly nasty critters to avoid. Whatever the nature of the danger, the warning is true, and never fails to prove helpful. When he is done, he mentions that he has a duty to perform before the dawn comes, but that he feels too tired to go just now. If he is invited to remain with the company until daybreak, he accepts gladly and soon falls asleep by the fire. For the length of the encounter Farmann seems just an old man, too old for this life of adventure. By daybreak, the old man and his horse disappear without a trace.

If a companion asks about Farmann's duty, the old man says he has a wife and daughter living in the northern Dalelands, and that he should return to them — but again, he is too tired. If someone volunteers to accompany him home, he accepts, but whoever goes with him must face a wearisome task, as Farmann seems to fall asleep on his horse every other minute or so, and must obtain at least one success in a roll of EXPLORE and RIDDLE to interpret the weak directions of the March-warden. If Farmann is led successfully, the group eventually spots a small watchtower atop a hill, just before day breaks — the old rider appears suddenly animated by a sense of urgency, and thanks the companions while trotting away and leaving them behind. When finally the sun rises, Farmann is gone, and the watchtower is revealed for what it is, a ring of crumbling stones, blackened by fire. Companions with a Shadow score feel relieved, as if they just received good news from someone they care for — everyone may decrease their Shadow score by one point.

errands from their kings or masters, suspicious Dwarves and hasty Men from the Long Lake and Dale.

Notable Characters

Farmann, the March-warden

Many wanderers who have journeyed across the grey road tell tales of a solitary figure, a rider who makes his appearance when a company of travellers faces particularly dangerous odds. The rider is usually seen at a distance, on a hilltop or just at the edge of vision at night. He points in right direction when a group seems to have lost their way, or to warn companies of impending danger, such as approaching wild wolves or other threats.

The figure is described as a Northman warrior carrying shield, sword and a tall spear, riding a stout mountain horse with a snow-white mane. He is often referred to as Farmann, the March-warden. A few witnesses, maybe the more imaginative ones, depict him as an old man, ancient beyond the reckoning of years, but with a keen, piercing gaze. Some attribute to him the pale, cold fires that may be spied at night blazing on the hilltops dotting the landscape around the east gap.

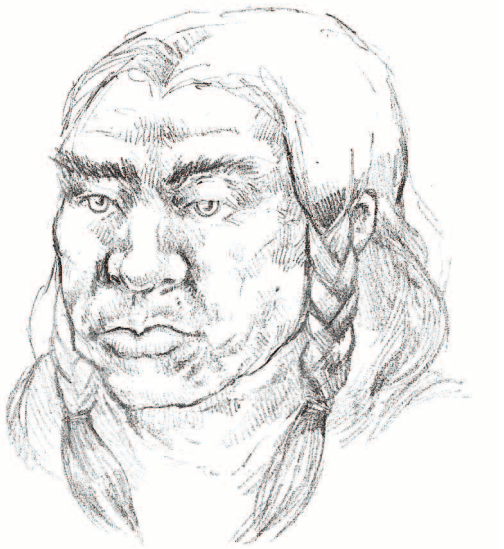
Frár the Beardless

Frár, called the Beardless, is one of the houseless Dwarves who live in the Narrows of the Grey Mountains. It is said he lost his beard when he was captured and tortured by Goblins in the ruins of the Dwarf-hall called the Greydelve, which was the home of his ancestors for many long ages until the Goblins took it. In truth, his beard was cut in a quarrel with servants of the Elvenking.

Today, Frár is a wandering tinker and potsmith, travelling down as far as Lake-town on his journeys. Wherever he goes, he tells tales of the Goblins, and tries to rally the Dwarves and other Free Folk to his cause. Even the other Dwarves think Frár to be a madman, and fear that the Greydelve is forever lost to Durin's folk.

Since the death of the Dragon and the re-establishment of the King under the Mountain, Frár has visited Dáin Ironfoot's court once each year to demand that Dáin send warriors to reclaim the Greydelve. So far, Dáin has always counselled patience, saying that the Greydelve is too far from Erebor to risk such an expedition. The Greydelve lies near the source of the Forest River. It was never the richest of the Dwarf-holds, but was famed for the quality of its steel.

Frár knows all the Dwarves who live in the Narrows, and is a good guide to that region – to be more precise, he knows all the paths in that region as well as he remembers every knot and hair in his vanished beard. Whether or not he is a good travelling companion depends on his mood – on the wrong day, Frár can be as treacherous and bitter as a Petty-dwarf. He hates the Elves, who twice caught him trespassing in the Woodland Realm.



He wears a tooth from Scatha the Worm on a golden chain around his neck. This talisman is a reminder of all that has been taken from the Dwarves.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Tunnelling, Trading
Distinctive Features: Eccentric, Vengeful
Relevant skills: Survival ♦♦♦, Axes ♦♦♦
Endurance: 22

Tholin the Trader

The Blue Mountains lie many, many leagues to the west, and Tholin the Trader knows every long, hard mile – and every inn on the way, too. He is an old Dwarf, merry and kindly by the gruff standards of his folk, and for many lifetimes of Men he has travelled between the Blue

Mountains and the Iron Hills. His regular route brings him from the Iron Hills to the Lonely Mountain and Dale (replacing his previous stop at Lake-town), then along the Narrows, south to the Old Ford, then over the High Pass into Eriador, where he always makes a point of visiting the Prancing Pony in Bree before passing through the Shire. The journey takes him half a year or more.

Younger Dwarves (and even the occasional Hobbit) often accompany Tholin on his long treks, and he is a canny guide. He has many friends both west and east of the Mountains, including a certain Wizard who is even better travelled than Tholin. In fact, it's said that Gandalf enchanted Tholin's blackthorn walking-staff, although what power he placed in it is known only to the two of them.

Tholin's beard is as white as the snow on the mountains, and each journey takes a few more days than the last, but he refuses to lay down his burdens and rest. There's always the next inn to get to, always another traveller to meet.

Attribute level: 6
Specialities: Folk-lore, Old lore, Trading
Distinctive Features: Merry
Relevant skills: Travel ♦♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦, Pursuade ♦♦♦, Axes ♦♦
Endurance: 20

Notable Places

The Hoary Mountain

The southern face of the Grey Mountains range is an uninterrupted wall of menacing peaks, rising tall to the west and slowly diminishing in the east. The tallest among them is known as the *Gamolberg*, the hoary mountain, a mighty height towering above deep-shadowed glens and dells. It takes its name from its snow-capped summit, that often appears streaked with grey, as the limestone surface is revealed by strong winds or by the warmer seasons' thawing. Centuries ago, Men living in the north used to test their courage by climbing the mountain's sheer southern face, and stories tell of a throne sitting atop a high terrace, carved in the grey rock by the North wind itself.

The Greydelve

The Dwarf-hold of the Greydelve lies hidden in a box canyon in the foothills of the Grey Mountains. It was once among the largest of the Dwarven settlements in this region, and the Dwarves dug very deep into the mountains. Some tales claim that they dug so deep that they broke into the ruins of some lost fortress from the First Age of the world, and found things there so terrible that they walled up those deeper passageways and warded them with traps both cunning and lethal.

The folk of this fortress were driven from their home by Goblins long ago. Frár the Beardless (see above) is their chief, and still dreams of reclaiming the Greydelve.

West Upper Vales

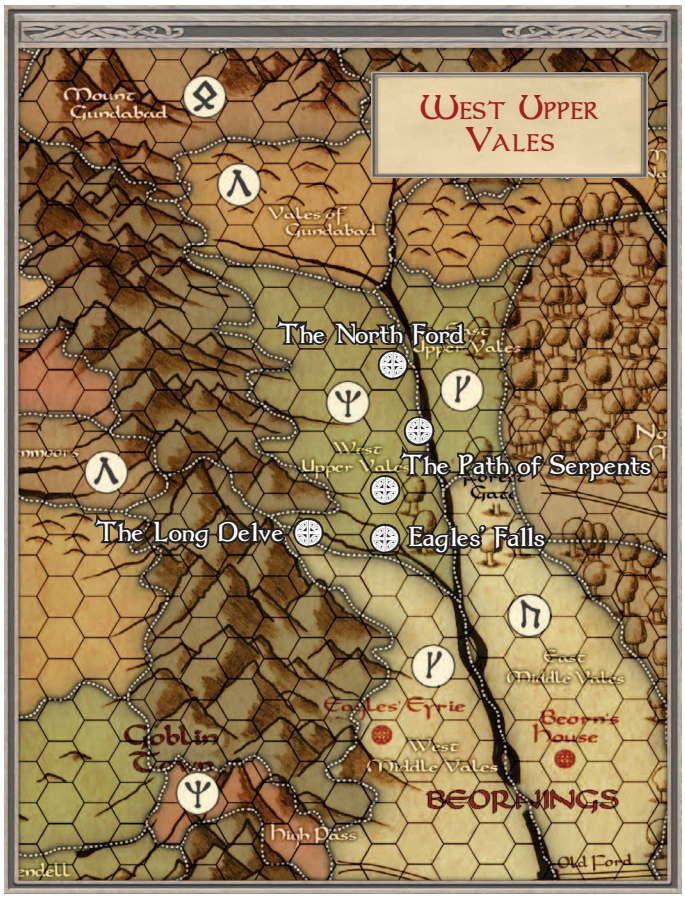
The green meadows of the West Upper Vales seem lush and inviting. Mountain-cold streams flow merrily through gently rolling countryside. Each step seems to open up new vistas, as though your eyes were the first to ever look upon this land, or you had somehow stepped back in time to when the world was young and Arda was Unmarred. But in the tongue of the Vales of Anduin, this land is named *Sceadudene*, the Vale of Shadow...

The northern border of this land is marked by the Langwell River. To the west, by the Misty Mountains, to the east Anduin, and to the south the river Rushdown that tumbles off the mountains over the Eagles' Falls. Above the falls, the Rushdown receives the waters of another stream, sometimes called the Serpent River.

Most of the Vales consist of green valleys of heather and grass, marked by the occasional thicket. Still, the going is surprisingly hard in places, with many concealed holes, jagged stones, tangled roots and sudden drops to slow travellers.

The western hills are steep and virtually impassable; in places, sheer cliffs rise from the green land like great waves of stone, and seem about to crash down on the heads of travellers. The largest of these cliffs, Fram's Wall, runs for more than fives miles without any breaks, and is said to be unscalable.

The southern folds of the land, along the Rushdown, are thickly wooded with grey pine forests that stretch from the Anduin into the foothills of the mountains. The southern forests are called the *Wyrmholt* on certain old maps, although they are usually called the Rushdown Woods in the Common Tongue.



This is a wild, trackless land. Outside the settled region in the northeast, there are no settlements or paths in this area. This is the primordial wild, as untamed and dangerous as it was at the dawn of time.

Wildlife

A traveller in the West Upper Vales can expect to see traces of animals such as wild sheep and goats, foxes and wolves. Deer and boars may be found in the wooded regions, with the mountain slopes being home to bears. At night, swarms of bats emerge to hunt insects over the streams.

Wolves and Wargs are regrettably common in this region. Huge packs come down out of the north to hunt prey, on four legs or two.

A dangerous breed of great lizards hides in the forests and hills along the Rushdown River. Ill-tempered and aggressive, these creatures are known by the Elves as sarnlug, or basilisks; the Elves claim that the Enemy bred these monsters long ago and unleashed them in the mountains to impede the Elves' journeys to the West. Legends of the Beornings say that a basilisk can kill just by gazing at its victims — a rumour that no hunter can confirm or deny. (See also the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

Inhabitants

The north-eastern Vales, along the banks of the Anduin, are home to a few fiercely independent cottars and free-folk. These are of Northman stock, akin to the Beornings, but they call no man their lord. Each family has their own homestead, sometimes fortified, and they trade little with their neighbours and even less with strangers.

Some of them seem to have befriended a small number of Stone-Trolls, with gifts of sheep, crude tools, and simple clothes. These lumbering monsters can be spied at night as they work in the fields dragging ploughs, eradicating small trees or breaking large stones, sometimes answering the direct orders of a farmer with a few words in the Common Speech. While contact with the farmers has certainly improved both their manners and tempers, Trolls are still Trolls, and any hero bothering their 'employers' may find confirmation of this fact the hard way.

This land is not far from the Eagles' Eyrie, so the birds of the Misty Mountains may be encountered in these parts. The Eagles hunt Wargs and other creatures of the Enemy, but also steal sheep and livestock from the cottars, and so they are not welcome in the Northern Vales.

Notable Characters

Mab the Spinner

Mab the Spinner lives somewhere near the edge of the Rushdown Forest, in a little cottage in the woods. She is ancient for a mortal woman — none of the folk of the Sceadudene remember a time when Mab was not in her shack. She spins wool into threads and weaves fine garments, which she exchanges for food with the wives of local cottars. She has no family, but employs a River-folk child as a helper.

Mab also has a reputation as a witch. How else could she survive in the haunted forest? Certainly, she is as talented a healer as can be found in the vales, and has a deep knowledge of herbs, poisons, potions and simples. She is known for her strengthening cordial, a liquor she sells exclusively to the River-folk traders.

The cottars of the area travel to her when they need a cure for pox or other illness, but they whisper about her strange powers over spiders, and wonder what happens to the River-folk children when she is done with them.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Shadow-lore, Rhymes of Lore, Weaving
Distinctive Features: Clever, Secretive
Relevant skills: Lore ♦♦♦♦, Craft ♦♦♦, Healing ♦♦♦

Cruac the Outlaw

Cruac leads an outlaw band that preys on travellers in the Vales. Few wanderers pass this way – most traffic runs along the Anduin, or along the eastern shore down to the Old Ford – so Cruac's men must cross the river in their boats to find suitable victims. They look for Dwarves, who are always rich in silver and gold, or traders bringing fur down from the Gore of Anduin. Cruac's hideout is in a sheltered valley in the heart of the region.

Cruac does not look like a fearsome outlaw. He is a slight, meek-mannered fellow who stands no more than five feet high, with a scraggly beard and a growing bald spot. He won his place at the head of his company through his cleverness and bravery, not through strength. He is an accomplished liar; he sometimes befriends travellers and lures them into ambushes, or visits the Beorning settlements to learn if they are hunting him. Cruac lets his loyal men do the fighting for him – as far as he's concerned, battles are won in the mind long before they are fought by force of arms.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Burglary, Mountaineering
Distinctive Features: Cunning, Merry
Relevant skills: Battle ♦♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦
Endurance: 18

Black Tom

The house of Black Tom is a fortified farmstead in the east of Sceadudene, with many outbuildings and enclosures for livestock. Tom is the head of a large household, and his word carries great weight among the cottars. The proud folk of this land have no lords or chieftains or kings, but they listen when Tom speaks.

Of late, Tom has been visited by emissaries from the Viglundings across the river (see the East Upper Vales, page 27), who offered him gold and promised him a place of honour if he took Viglund as his lord. Their threats went unspoken, but were just as clear despite this. Refuse Viglund's offer of friendship, and suffer the consequences. Tom's farm is not far from the Anduin. If the Viglundings come for him, his thick walls may not protect his family from the iron collars of the slavers.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Beast-lore, Gardener
Distinctive Features: Tall, Gruff
Relevant skills: Awe ♦♦, Song ♦♦♦, Long-hafted Axe ♦♦
Endurance: 20

The Lonely Giant

The story of the Lonely Giant is probably a drunken tale told by young Beornings after too much mead, but there may be a little truth in it. According to the story, a Giant came down from the Misty Mountains a year ago and is now camped in a dell. The Giant eats roasted boar and wild apples, and lives in a tent made from the skins of two

dozen bears, with mighty oak-trees for poles. If anyone disturbs him, he asks them a fiendishly hard riddle. No-one knows what happens if you guess his riddle correctly, but everyone knows what happens when you get it wrong – the Giant smashes you with a very big rock!

The Kingfisher Lord

The Lord of the Eagles of the Misty Mountains is the King of All Birds, crowned in Dwarf-gold. All the birds of Middle-earth obey him and honour him, but he was not the only contender for the title. His rival was the Kingfisher Lord. The Kingfisher Lord dwells in a golden nest along the River Anduin, and is very bitter about the accolades paid to the Lord of the Eagles.

Since the coronation, the Kingfisher Lord has plotted against the Eagles, his heart filled with jealousy. He rules the fish and fowl of the Anduin, and hears many stories from the river. He can even command his servants to trouble intruders – a school of trout or a flock of sparrows are not going to defeat a warrior of Dale, but they could topple his boat into the water or steal his food.

The Kingfisher is not a servant of the Shadow by any means, but he plays cruel tricks on friends of the Eagles who enter his domain. As an ally, he can be a valuable source of news from far afield.

Notable Places

The Long Delve

The Long Delve is a tunnel that starts somewhere near the source of the Rushdown River, and worms its way underground for sixty miles through the Misty Mountains to emerge in the valley of the Hoarwell in Rhudaur. Parts of the excavations were accomplished by Dwarves in the First Age, but only Orcs know its secret ways now. Not all the length of the Long Delve is passable, and in places fallen rocks block the way, but the Orcs have dug side passages to crawl through. Only the smaller Goblins can pass through the tunnel – the fatter Orcs have trouble squeezing through, and Cave-Trolls cannot fit at all.

At times, parts of the Long Delve flood – the Dwarves widened the natural caves carved by the fast-flowing rivers, so when rain filters down through the mountains, it washes unwary Goblins out of the tunnel. Their bodies wash up on the banks of the Rushdown a few days later.

The Orcs guard the Long Delve with all sorts of cunning traps, and ambush anyone who tries to trespass through their short cut. The entrances to the tunnel are watched night and day by Goblin spies, and there are guardhouses along its length to turn back intruders.

During the height of power of the Kingdom of Angmar, the Witch-king sent Men from Carn Dûm to repair the Long Delve and open it so a whole army could march through it. This plan never came to fruition, but the Enemy knows of the underground passage, and it could offer a way to invade Eriador without braving the High Pass or the Gap of Rohan.

Eagles' Falls

The river Rushdown tumbles over the high Eagles' Falls, plunging more than sixty feet over a rocky ledge to a deep green pool in the forest below. Two huge trees grow over the falls. These trees are unlike any that grow elsewhere in Middle-earth, as they were found only in Númenor before

it drowned. Their seeds were brought here by Great Eagles before the Downfall.

This place is sacred to the Eagles of the Misty Mountains; they gather here at midsummer to listen to the voice of the waterfall. Radagast believes that on that night, the waterfall speaks prophecies and secrets to the Great Eagles. Anyone who tries to eavesdrop on the Eagles risks incurring their wrath, and they are merciless when roused.

The Path of Serpents

The Path of Serpents is an old, old road that begins near the Anduin and crosses through the southern portion of the West Upper Vales. It winds through the countryside, distinguishable from the land on either side only by a slight discolouration of the grass and the occasional carved waystone, before plunging into the Rushdown Forest.

The waystones in the forest were sheltered by the trees and are better-preserved than those exposed to the elements. These stones stand four feet tall and are carved to resemble strange snakes or dragons. The stones have hollow eye-sockets, as if made to hold gemstones. The path leads on into the forest, and where it goes no one knows. The path goes through regions of the forest inhabited by the sarnlug, and they are always hungry...

The North Ford

The North Ford is the first place south of the Gore where the Anduin can be crossed without swimming or boating. It is only fordable when the river is low, at the height of summer or after a prolonged drought, and even then it is a perilous crossing, as the fast-flowing waters can sweep away the unwary. The days when the North Ford is passable are used by livestock traders, who can drive their herds across the Anduin without the expense and risk of using rafts or boats.

East Upper Vales

The east side of the White Anduin is a grim wold of scrub trees and rocky soil. It makes for poor farmland. In days of old, this was the eastern frontier of Éothéod, and it was called the *Eastmark*. Back then, it was thickly forested, but the horse-people were hungry for timber to build their long-houses, and their axes bit deep into Mirkwood as their ancestors had done in the East Bight.

To the north, the forest falls away and the Vales of Anduin open into the Narrows in the shadows of the Grey Mountains. No one lives in this region, not even along the eaves of the Forest as everyone fears its darkness. Northern Mirkwood (see page 69) is a tangled forest full of perils and monsters, and they are wise to fear the shadows of the trees. The only travellers who brave this land are taciturn Dwarves and traders hurrying west from Esgaroth and Dale.

The riverbanks and the southern vales, by contrast, are more fertile and welcoming. These green valleys are home to hardy Northmen of the House of Viglund. The land here is twisted and buckled like a thrashing snake, with many steep-sided valleys divided by narrow stony ridges. In places, tall piles or pinnacles of stones rise from the ground; the Viglundings claim these stones to be the ancient work of Giants who once dwelt in this land.

Wildlife

The north and east parts of the East Upper Vales are plagued by beasts like wild wolves and Wargs. Dangerous boars and bears sometimes stray out of Mirkwood, and the Viglunding hunters cannot always stop them from trespassing into the farmland. The forest eaves are home to flocks of black crows and other birds, especially around the Forest Gate. The eastern banks of the Great River are also home to many venomous snakes, who make their lairs beneath rocks and prey on insects and small animals.

Inhabitants

The people of the Eastmark are akin to the cottars of the western portion of the Upper Vales, but they are mostly united under a chieftain named Viglund. They dwell in the green lands of the southern valleys, or along the forest eaves. They hew the forest for timber, but they are not Woodmen, and only the bravest of them dare dwell beneath the trees. Most live in fortified houses and forts atop hills, where three or four families live together behind the protection of good walls and ramparts. Not all the Viglundings obey Viglund, although those who defy him are increasingly isolated and treated as foes. Viglund became chieftain in the dark years before the Battle of Five Armies, when Goblins troubled the land and the power of the Necromancer grew unchecked. Now, he rules through fear and strength of arms. His war-band consists of the best fighters the Eastmark can muster, and all these warriors support Viglund's cruel reign.

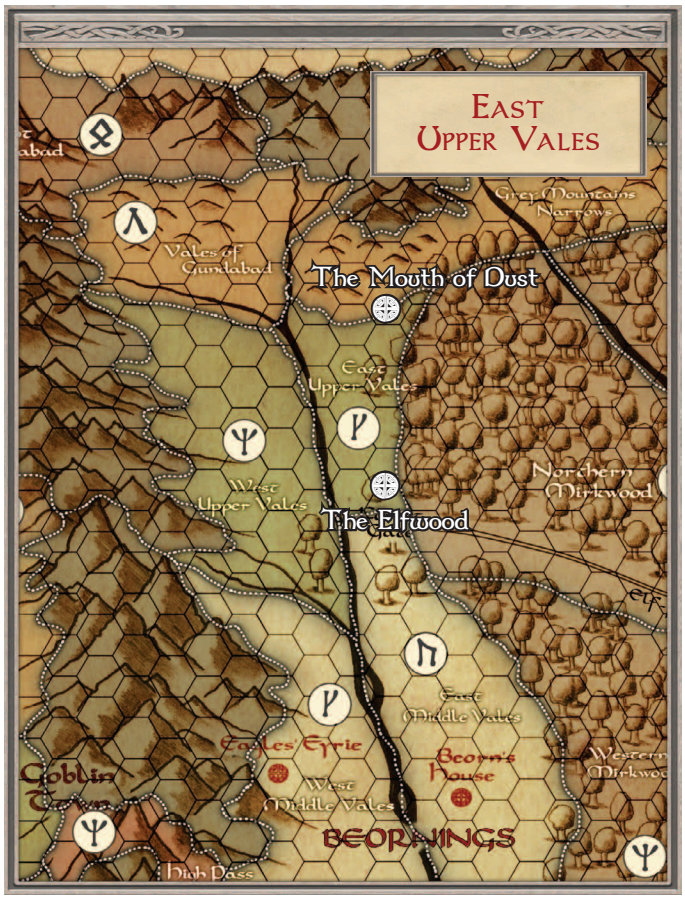
The folk of the Eastmark practise slavery. Traditionally among the Northmen, only criminals could be made into thralls, and the influence of Gondor put an end to even that practise for centuries. It was only in the last few decades that slavery has once again come into use in the Vales of Anduin. The slaves of the Eastmark come from many places — from the free cottars, from the Hill-men who live across the river, from the Beornings, captured outlaws, and even from their own kin. They put their thralls to work tilling the fields or serving in the houses.

Strange Faces In Familiar Lands

I evidently came back by much too straight a road from my trip.

Adding new material to regions that the Company has already explored is a tricky business. If your Companions are regular visitors to the East Upper Vales, then they might ask why they have never met the Viglundings before. If they know the River well, then why did they not meet with the River-folk? There are several possible explanations — choose the one that best fits the current situation.

- *The adventurers travelled through uninhabited parts of the region.* Wilderland is very large, and there are only a handful of people living within its borders. The company's previous journeys happened to avoid any settlements, either by chance or design.
- *The people were away in another part of the region.* Even comparatively settled groups like the Beornings or Viglundings move with the seasons. If the company passed through this land in the winter, then maybe most people were in their winter shelters and so the adventurers passed by unnoticed. Groups like the River-folk travel the whole length of Wilderland, so it is easy to miss them if one crosses the Anduin at the wrong time.
- *The adventurers met them, but did not know them.* The Viglundings, for example, have a bad reputation as slavers, but that does not mean that every Viglunding is equally awful. Perhaps that friendly farmer that the adventurers met on a previous journey was actually a follower of Viglund, even though he keeps no slaves and is friendly to outsiders.
- *The adventurers deliberately avoided them:* This is perhaps the most interesting option — why did the Company's Guide steer them away from places where they might meet the people of this land? What unfinished business do they have with him?



Between the Viglundings and the land of the Beornings is a belt of free cottars and foresters who live in the lands immediately surrounding the Forest Gate. There is a fierce rivalry between the Viglundings and the followers of Beorn, and this sentiment has worsened of late. The Viglundings covet the lands of the Beornings, and there are old grudges held by those who saw their kin enslaved by raiders from the north.

Dwarves crossing from Erebor or the Iron Hills to their mines in Eriador often come this way. They march across the wastes north of Mirkwood, then follow the river south to the Old Ford. They trade grudgingly with the Viglundings, and neither group trusts the other.

Notable Characters

Viglund

Cruel Viglund, grey-bearded and iron-eyed, rules from his long-house under the eaves of Northern Mirkwood, and he tolerates no weakness or dissent among his followers.

Viglund's word is more than law – it is a command that must be obeyed. His clan would kill or die at a word from their lord. He tells himself that he must be hard to protect his followers from the dangers that beset them on every side, but in truth Viglund is a tyrant, drunk on power.

He has a fierce hatred for Beorn, and the two may be akin. Viglund is not as large as Beorn, nor as strong, but he has the same booming voice and kingly mien. If he is a skin-changer, as some folk whisper, then no-one knows what form he takes when he walks abroad at night. His rivalry with Beorn began when the lord of the Carrock took some of those who fled Viglund's rule under his protection. Since then, Viglund has poisoned the minds of his remaining followers against the Beornings, claiming that they are savage beasts and monsters.

Viglund's followers practise slavery, and capture thralls on raids. Some are Beornings or cottars from the western vales; others are Goblins, but the misshapen creatures cannot abide the light of day and so make poor farm-hands. Viglund uses these Goblin slaves as beaters and scouts when he hunts in the forest.

Conflict between Viglund and the Beornings is a key element in *The Darkening of Mirkwood*.

Attribute level:	7
Specialities:	Goblin-lore, Mirkwood-lore
Distinctive Features:	Cruel, Stern, Vengeful
Relevant skills:	Battle ♦♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦, Axe ♦♦♦♦
Endurance:	23

Viglar, Son of Viglund

Viglar is the eldest of Viglund's sons. He leads the raiding parties and warbands sent out by his father. More accurately, he follows along with wineskin in one hand and axe in the other – he is more interested in feasting and drinking with his fellow warriors than anything else. He has little grasp of tactics, or politics, or anything except crude jokes and drinking games. When sober – or at least, only a little drunk – he is a good axeman.

As Viglund's oldest son, Viglar is his presumed heir. Without a strong leader, the Viglundings may fall into savagery and kinstrife when Viglund dies.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Carousing
Distinctive Features: Reckless, Robust
Relevant skills: Song ♦♦♦, Persuade ♦♦, Axe ♦♦♦
Endurance: 19

Saviga the Goblin

There are a few captured Goblins among the Viglunding slaves. These unfortunate creatures rarely survive for long far from the shadow of the mountains. Saviga, though, has learned to survive in Viglar's retinue. The Goblin is Viglar's cup-bearer and jester; his caperings and vile jests make the son of Viglund laugh until he retches, and so Saviga survives for another day.

In truth, Saviga also gives secret counsel to Viglar, suggesting targets for raids, playing one warrior off against each other, and tempting Viglar into the worship of the Enemy. Should Viglar become chieftain, then Saviga will continue to whisper poison into his ear. Saviga is not usually allowed to bear arms, but should his life be threatened, he would try to get hold of a spear, a weapon he wields to great effect.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Goblin-lore, Story-Telling
Distinctive Features: Cunning, Patient
Relevant skills: Insight ♦♦♦, Persuade ♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦
Endurance: 12

Thunar

Thunar was one of Viglar's warrior companions. Indeed, Thunar was the best of them; he was the bravest, the strongest, the most skilled with sword and bow, and the most fearsome in battle. Two years ago, Viglar, Thunar and the rest of the young warriors of the Viglundings went hunting in Mirkwood. A huge black boar scattered them and gored Thunar, and hurled him into a ravine. Viglar fled rather than try to rescue his friend.

Thunar survived, and wandered alone through Mirkwood for weeks before emerging from the darkness of the wood.

It took him more than a year to recover his strength. Now, he is once again strong enough to lead hunts and raiding parties. He curses Viglar for his cowardice, and the two — once close as brothers — are now bitter foes.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Mirkwood-lore, Fire-Making
Distinctive Features: Fair, Vengeful
Relevant skills: Battle ♦♦♦♦, Hunting ♦♦♦, Axe ♦♦♦♦, Bow ♦♦♦
Endurance: 21

Aestid, Daughter of Viglund

Tall Aestid is Viglund's daughter, and betrothed to one of his important followers, a brute of a man named Othbald. She despises Othbald, and secretly loves a young Beorning warrior. Aestid plans to escape her betrothal and flee across Wilderland, but if she goes, then Othbald will surely pursue her and bring fire and bloodshed with him. Unlike her cruel father, there is little malice in Aestid's soul. Therefore, she has conceived a plan — she intends to free all Othbald's slaves on the night she flees. Othbald will have to choose between his bride and his servants, and will be unable to recapture them all.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Trading, Folk-lore
Distinctive Features: Clever, Determined
Relevant skills: Stealth 4, Riddle 3
Endurance: 20

Notable Places

The Mouth of Dust

The Mouth of Dust refers to the pass that leads out of the Vales of Anduin and into the ghastly narrows between Mirkwood and the Grey Mountains. A huge standing stone marks the entrance to the pass; the Dwarves often bury supply caches and money near the stone for their return journey across the wastes. These caches are hidden using Dwarf-magic, and none may find them unless he catches the Dwarf and shakes the secret out of him.

The Elfwood

The thinly wooded land around the Forest Gate is called the Elfwood. It is not part of Mirkwood proper. The trees are not tangled and dark, and a little light makes it through the canopy of dark green leaves. In times past, the Elves of the Woodland Realm came here to feast and make merry, and some even left the shadows of the forest to walk down to the river and speak to the rushing waters. Today, the Elfwood is a barrier between the Upper and Middle Vales, and so serves as the border between Beorn's territory and that of Viglund.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Gather Firewood in the Elfwood

Firewood gathered from the Elfwood — a region of Mirkwood that is mostly free from Shadow-taint — burns warmly and merrily, raising spirits and warding off the bite of winter. When dried, it catches fire easily even in the worst conditions.

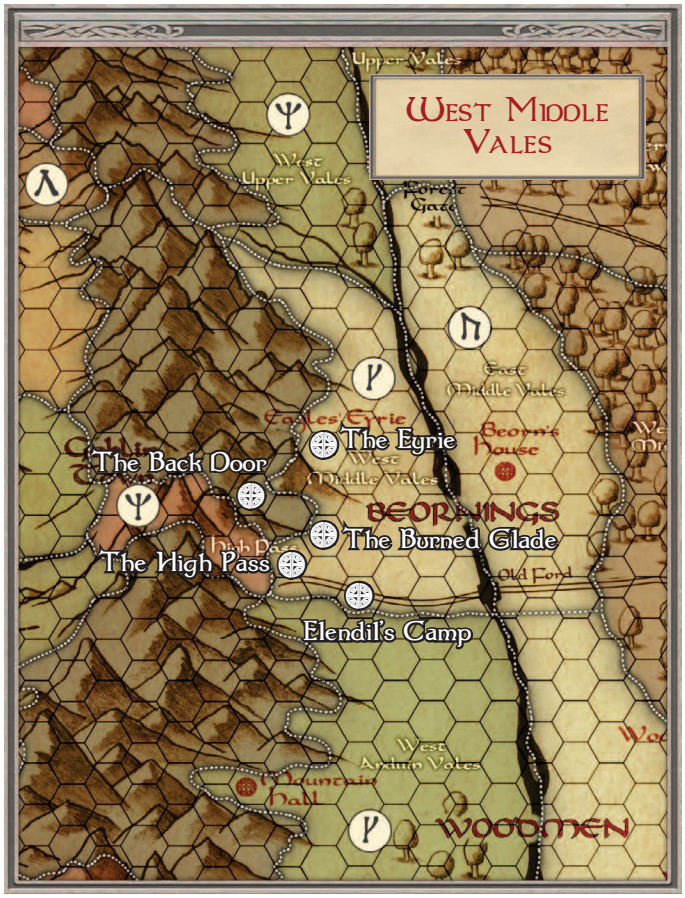
A character spending a Fellowship phase at Beorn's House or someplace nearby may choose this undertaking and gain the benefits of the *Fire-making* speciality for the duration of the following Adventuring phase. If the character already has *Fire-making*, then he may gain two benefits out of a single Trait invocation (for example, he could automatically succeed at a roll and gain an Advancement point).

West Middle Vales

The West Middle Vales were Bilbo Baggins' first taste of Wilderland east of the mountains. The area has long been empty. Men dwelt here, long ago, but plague and war and goblin-mischief drove them away. Now, they are returning. The region extends from the Rushdown River to the Old Forest Road. Pine forests grow in the mountain valleys, broken by great expanses of bracken and stony ground.

Three large valleys dominate the western section. The north valley is bordered by the Rushdown River and the Rushdown Woods. South of the river, the trees thin out into a broken land of brambles and bare stones riven by

many caves. The middle valley is called *Earnesdene*, the Eagles' Vale, for their great Eyrie dominates it. The Eyrie is a soaring pinnacle of rock, the easternmost spire of the Misty Mountains, with numerous ledges and perches along its height. Only a flying creature could hope to reach these high ledges. The valley below is home to many furtive, frightened things who dread the swoop of Eagle's wings. This valley is mostly pine forest, with oaks and elms growing closer to the Great River banks.



The southernmost valley opens into the High Pass (*Cirith Forn en Andrath* in Sindarin) and is the only place where one might reasonably expect to meet another traveller, as the road to the mountain-path runs through this land. This valley has been the access to the west since before the Sun and Moon rose in the sky. Elves climbed these hills on the way to the Blessed Realm, the Númenoreans built the road straight and true in days of yore, and Elendil and Gil-galad marched down this road on the way to Mordor. This is the Road that runs through Mirkwood, the Road to the Sea, the Road to Adventure.

As the hills and valleys give way to flatter ground, the traveller enters onto a great green plain that stretches for miles down to the river.

Wildlife

In the pine forests of the mountains live rabbits, squirrels and mountain foxes. Serpents are a danger in the north valley, near the Rushdown. Closer to the river live otters, beavers and other river-creatures.

This territory was Warg-land once, but between the Eagles and the vigilance of the Beornings, the wild wolves only dare cross into this land during the winter or on cloudy nights when the Eagles cannot spot them from afar.

Inhabitants

Goblin-town lies under the Misty Mountains, and the Orcs issue forth from innumerable holes and secret passageways to trouble the lands below. Thousands of Orcs live in this region, all eager to avenge the death of the Great Goblin. Since the Battle of Five Armies, they have rebuilt their strength, and there is a new Great Goblin under the mountain now.

The Great Eagles fly far over Middle-earth, even to the distant mouths of the Anduin and the sea, but these mountains are their home. They are not common creatures — their goals and motivations are unfathomable by everyone including the Wise, and possibly serve a greater purpose. They watch over the land, and bring messages to those who are enemies of the one Enemy. Their numbers are few, and they have little traffic with mortals (except when stealing their delicious sheep). The Eyrie is the largest of their nests in the mountains.

Men also dwell in small numbers in the mountains. These folk are as hard and stern as the places they call home, and speak their own strange tongue as well as the Common Speech. They serve Beorn, but remain suspicious and private even when among fellow Beornings. "As tough as the Mountain-men," say the Beornings, but when they are gone they also say "as cold as the Mountain-men".

In recent years, a few other bold folk have come up from the south to settle in this land. They have farms and herds on the west banks of the River. They count Beorn as their lord,

but they are not like the rest of the Beornings. Most of Beorn's followers are Northmen whose families have dwelt in the Middle Vales for centuries, but these folk are closer kin to the Leofrings or the River-folk.

Notable Characters

The Lord of the Eagles

The Lord of the Eagles rules over the Great Eagles of the Misty Mountains, and is the King of All Birds. He is descended from Thorondor, who built his eyries in the inaccessible peaks of the Encircling Mountains when the world was young. Gandalf healed the Lord of the Eagles when he was wounded by an Orc-arrow, and has had the friendship of the birds ever since.

Other Eagles in the Lord's retinue include Gwaihir the Windlord, the swiftest of the Great Eagles, his brother Landroval and young Meneldor. These are like knights-errant in the Lord's court, flying far afield on missions and matters of grave importance. The other Eagles serve as watchers and warriors, bringing news of the Enemy from one end of the Misty Mountains to the other. In the darkest of times, the Lord of the Eagles may muster his forces and bring his army to war. This has only happened once in memory, when the Eagles came to the Battle of Five Armies.

The Lord of the Eagles is more proud and noble than any king of mortal Men, for his lineage is far older. Only the High Elves have a heritage to match that of the Eagles. Anyone who treats the Lord as nothing more than an overgrown bird deserves his fate (the Eagles have been known to drop rude guests from a great height, or deposit them in unpleasant places like half-way up sheer cliffs or in the middle of a huge briar patch. **Courtesy** is of the utmost importance when dealing with such a great King.

The New Great Goblin

Gandalf slew the old Great Goblin in Goblin-town, but the title is hereditary. (Well, in truth, it goes to the biggest, fattest, meanest Goblin). The New Great Goblin is actually the third Great Goblin in recent years – the second Great Goblin died at the Battle of Five Armies, torn apart by Beorn's claws. The new incumbent is immensely horrible, and has a special hatred of the Beornings. The Orcs used to prey on travellers in the Misty Mountains, but now the Beornings guard the Old Ford and the High Pass, and the Orcs have much less success. That's three grudges to be avenged upon the Beornings – one for sheltering the murderers of the first Great Goblin, one for killing the second Great Goblin at Erebor, and a third for inconveniencing the new Great Goblin.

Encountering the Lord of the Eagles

Unless the companions have a way of calling the attention of the Great Eagles, then the only ways to encounter their Lord are either to climb the mountains to get near to their Eyrie, or to catch their eye by chance. If brought before the Lord of the Eagles, then the companions must be extremely polite and respectful. The Eagles respect valour, but dismiss empty boasts. Lying to an Eagle is a very, very bad idea, because there's every chance they'll catch you out. The Eagles see very far indeed...

The Lord of the Eagles dislikes the Woodmen of the forest, as their longbows have often driven his followers away from tasty sheep. However, he is well disposed to Elves and – in recent times – Dwarves.

The Lord of the Eagles as a Patron

It is unlikely that any band of companions would gain the Lord of the Eagles as a patron, but committed enemies of the Shadow may be recruited as agents on the ground. The Eagles were sent by the powers of the Undying Lands to watch the movements of the Enemy, so any tasks given by the Lord of the Eagles will involve spying on the Enemy's servants, or thwarting the Enemy's plans.

The New Great Goblin (or, as he styles himself, the Greatest Goblin, with his predecessor being the Greater Goblin) is fat, lazy and cowardly, so he's always on the look-out for evil schemes that will bring him power and wealth without having to actually do any work or lead an army into battle. Any Orc who brings him a scheme to lure Beorn into an ambush, for example, or dig up some terrible weapon from the First Age is sure to be listened to. (See the New Great Goblin's description in the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

Osred the Rider

The newcomers who settled along the west bank of the Anduin count Beorn as their chief, but it was Osred who brought them to this green land. Osred was a famous warrior in his youth, and while his beard is now grey and his pate bald as the Carrock, he still has the respect and love of his followers. He commands a company of mounted warriors who patrol the roads from the Old Ford to the base of the High Pass, and is responsible for protecting travellers and collecting tolls.

Indeed, some of the Beornings grumble about Osred's tight grip on the tolls, and fear that his wealth and influence will one day eclipse that of Beorn. So far, Beorn has shown little interest in gold or in power, while each year Osred's furs grow more fancy and more golden bands adorn his arms. Osred has many friends and allies among the travellers on the road; he has contacts among the Dwarves and the River-folk and the merchants and even among the Elves.

Attribute level:	5
Specialities:	Trading, Folk-lore
Distinctive Features:	Generous, Lordly
Relevant skills:	Athletics ♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦
Endurance:	21

Notable Places

The High Pass

Cirith Forn en Andrath rises from the Vales of Anduin in a winding road. In places, this road is little more than a dirt track or a scar on the landscape, but in others the ancient works of the Dwarves can still be seen. The road is well designed, and rises above bogs and other obstacles on a ridge of packed earth and stone.

The High Pass actually consists of two paths. The road originally ran along the sheltered lower pass, but over the centuries the Orcs encroached on it, and now the low road is riddled with secret caves and tunnel exits. Any traveller who braves the low road is almost certain to be targeted by Goblin archers, so it is only used in times when the Orcs are in retreat. The Battle of Five Armies opened up the low road for a time, but now it is perilous once again.

The high road is not a road at all — it is a mountain path, more suitable for sure-footed goats than most travellers! It climbs high above the valley below, almost into the land of the Storm Giants. Orcs and Goblins have few caves along this path (although, as Thorin and company discovered, they do have some!), so travellers are less likely to be molested, but much more likely to freeze to death or fall from a crumbling cliff.

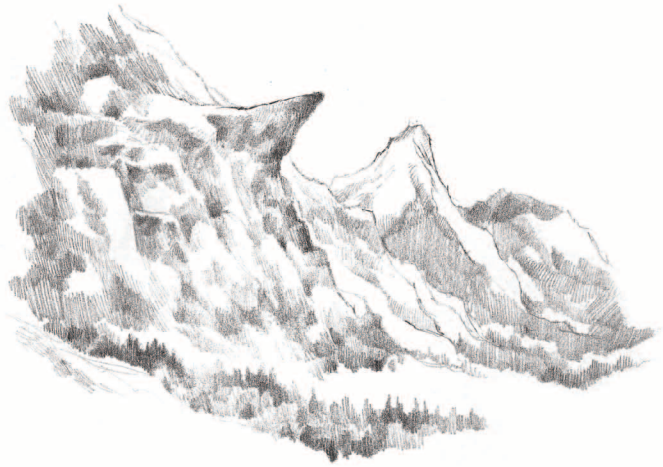
The Back Door

This is the lowest of the exits from the warren of tunnels and caves around Goblin-town. The tunnel emerges from the mountains at one end of a narrow valley near the High Pass. The way is blocked by a stone door that looks just like part of the hillside when closed, so only a Goblin or a keen-eyed Dwarf could tell where the Back Door begins.

The Orcs have a guard post on the far side of the door, and there are lots of hidden spyholes and watchtowers in the valley beyond, so they will know if anyone tries to sneak up on them.

The Eyrie

This sheer-sided mountain resembles a lonely watchtower, standing vigilant over the Vales of Anduin. The lower slopes of the mountain are shrouded in pine trees and furze, but the upper part is bare rock with scarcely a crack or a stone to provide a foothold. The Great Eagles nest in the crags atop the Eyrie, on rough rocky ledges and platforms.



A wider shelf of rock protrudes from the mountain-side, facing west. It is reached by no path known to Men: it is the Great Shelf, where the Eagles meet in parliament and where they bring guests and prisoners they wish to have dealings with. The Beornings say that there are secret passages in the mountain that lead up to the Great Shelf, but these tunnels are known only to two-legged allies and servants of the birds.

Elendil's Camp

The ruins that run alongside the road in part of *Cirith Forn en Andrath* are called Elendil's Camp in the folklore of the Beornings. In fact, these ruins have nothing to do with Elendil; they are the remains of a Northman trade town called Haycombe that was destroyed many centuries ago. Wights and other creatures of darkness haunt the ruins.

The Burned Glade

In the forests off the road, there was once a dark and frightful glade where the Wargs gathered to meet with their Goblin allies. That glade is no more — Gandalf's magic burnt it to a crisp before the Battle of Five Armies. Today, the skeletal remains of five fir-trees surround a burnt circle of ash. A few fiery-red flowers grow amid the devastation.

Opening the Eyrie as a Sanctuary

During an Adventuring phase, companions may gain permission to spend a first Fellowship phase as guests of the Eyrie. If they wish to return, they will have to make it a sanctuary. To do so, all companions must choose the *Open New Sanctuary* undertaking (see p. 173 of the Loremaster's Guide).

While normally this procedure is automatically successful, for the company to be able to re-enter the Eyrie in the future all heroes must pass a test of COURTESY. If all companions succeed, the Eyrie is now a sanctuary, and companions may return. If one or more companions failed, the heroes will have to again receive permission to re-enter the Eyrie during an Adventuring phase.

Spending the Fellowship Phase at the Eyrie

Companions spending a Fellowship phase as guests of the Eagles may find the available activities somewhat limited by the peculiarity of the place. But the unusual atmosphere of the Eyrie and the company of the noble birds make it a place of contemplation and relaxation: companions choosing the *Heal Corruption* undertaking are not required to roll but automatically reduce their Shadow score by three points instead.

Something of Gandalf's magic still lingers here, and evil things are afraid of the circle. It can provide a place of refuge when foes draw near.

Protection of the Burned Glade

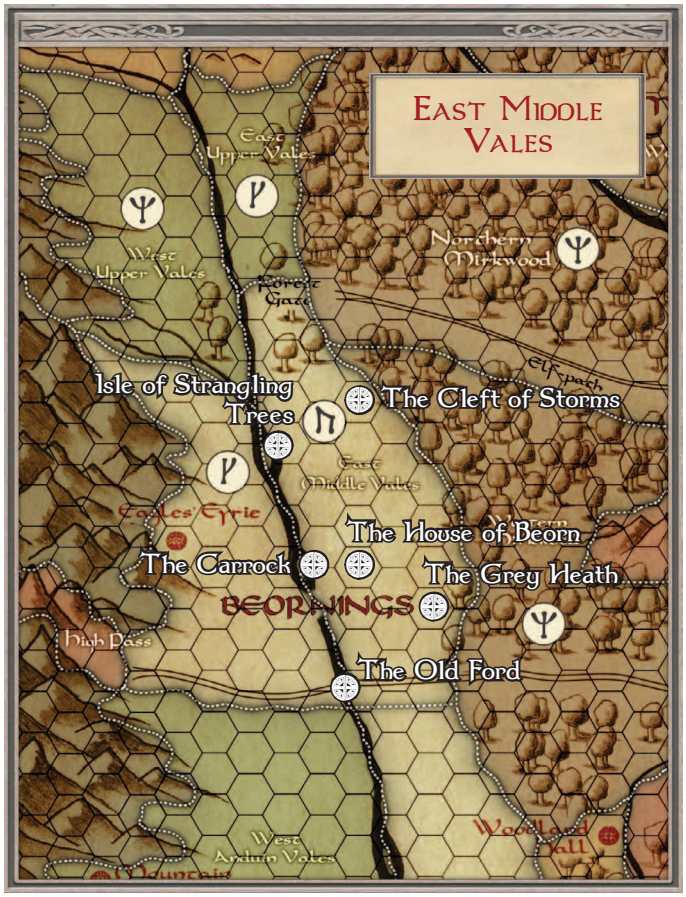
The burned glade is a good place to make a stand. First, a company defending inside it gains three bonus Success dice as combat advantages (in addition to those granted individually for successful rolls of BATTLE); these dice should be divided amongst the company as they see fit. Second, if a companion attempts the Intimidate Foe action in combat, any Hate loss caused is doubled.

East Middle Vales

Pluck a stay-at-home Hobbit from his comfortable life in the Shire and drop him in the East Middle Vales of Wilderland, and — once he gets over the shock and has a revivifying cup of tea, some seed-cake, and a nice sit down — you will certainly hear him comment on how nice this region seems to him. "A little unkempt", he'll say, "the grass needs cutting, the trees need a good trim, and you'll have to do something about the roads, but it somehow reminds me of the Shire." The East Middle Vales are a region of rich, fertile land. Green meadows and low rounded hills run from the River to the Forest. Vast fields of flowers blossom with a thousand vibrant colours in the summer, and there is good hunting in the woods come autumn.

Despite appearances, this is still the Wild. The land may be bountiful, but it is far from safe. Even under Beorn's protection, the folk who dwell here must be stalwart and brave, for Orcs and other monsters often threaten to trespass.

The Vales are bounded by the Great River on the west side, Mirkwood on the east side. To the north is the Elfwood and the hard land of the Viglundings. The south edge of this region is undefined. Beorn's territory once ended at the Old Forest Road, but now his followers have settlements many miles south of that. Where the Middle Vales end and the East Anduin Vales begin is a matter for debate between the Beornings and the Woodmen of Mirkwood.



Wildlife

The droning of bees and the chirping of birds is everywhere in the land of the Beornings. Huge bees as big as your thumb wander through the grasslands, looking for flowers. Foxes, rabbits, squirrels and other wild animals can also be found here in great numbers; the Vales are a profusion of life. These creatures are not tainted by the evils of Mirkwood. The squirrels of the East vales are fiery red, not the eerie black of their Mirkwood cousins. Unsurprisingly, many bears live in the thickets. They can often be seen ambling down to the Anduin to drink or to catch leaping fish. The Beornings consider the bears to be their kinfolk, and woe betide any man who wounds one.

The Beornings keep cattle, sheep, and ponies; wild versions of these may also be encountered as they roam free.

Beorn himself has a kennel of marvellous dogs, but there are few wild dogs in the region, and the wild wolves usually stay on the far side of the river.

Inhabitants

These fertile lands have been home to many Men since the earliest days. Each extended family has their own farmlands and pastures surrounding their fortified homestead. Unlike the Woodmen, they are not organised into Houses and until recently had no chieftain or any higher authority than the head of a household. Now, they call themselves Beornings; they follow Beorn and obey his laws. Not everyone living in this land bows to Beorn, and that is fine with him – he will not force anyone to listen to him.

While most Beornings live in isolated farmsteads, there are a few... well, towns would be an exaggeration. Call them villages, or farmsteads, clustered around trading posts or river crossings; one of the largest has sprung up in the vicinity of the Old Ford. The Beornings are a simple people – no inns, no shops, few traders or merchants or any of the trappings of civilised lands. Our hypothetical Hobbit would praise the baking and butter-making of the Beornings to high heaven, but be desperately upset at the lack of china plates or well-made butter-knives. The larger farmsteads do have guest-houses for travellers, where a wanderer may obtain dinner and a bed for the night.

There are no other speaking folk in this land, save for the Dwarves and other travellers who hurry through on their way West or South. In the south-east, there are a few Dwarves – the old road through Mirkwood was built by Durin's folk, and was once protected by a chain of forts. Both road and forts are abandoned now, but some Dwarves still dwell in the region called Stonehollow.

Notable Characters

Beorn

See the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 112 for information on Beorn the Skinchanger.

Turin the Tinker

Perhaps his parents dreamed their son would do great deeds when they gave him the name of a hero of old, but Turin the Tinker is nothing like Turin of the Black Sword. For one thing, he's a lot happier. Most heroes are dour folk, always talking about curses and dire omens and fell beasts. Heroes may accomplish deeds worthy of song and story, but they are never content. Much better to be a wandering seller of pots and pans and other items in the land of the Beornings.

Accompanied by his friend, a Dwarf named Loni, Turin travels the paths along the east banks of Anduin in a horse and cart. He sells all manner of things; horseshoes, utensils, weapons, cloth and leather, medicines from Woodmen-town, silver from the mountains, toys from Dale, and other curiosities he picked up in trades. He likes the peaceful life of a trader, and is careful to avoid areas frequented by outlaws or Orcs.

However, ever since he was young, Turin the Tinker has worried that he is beset by fate. What if he is destined to go on some great quest, or to fight some terrible foe? The name of Turin is long associated with doom and suffering, and Turin the Tinker worries that chance will force adventure on him. Therefore, he is careful to get rid of anything that looks like it might be the start of a perilous quest. If he stumbles upon a long-forgotten tomb, or finds a cryptic old scroll at the bottom of a chest of trade goods, or has a portentous dream of evil stirring in the Wild, he finds an adventurer as quickly as he can and foists this potential destiny off on them.

Attribute level: 2
Specialities: Trading, Smith-craft
Distinctive Features: Merry, Wilful
Relevant skills: Travel ♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦
Endurance: 16

Gelvira Pot-Stirrer

The farmstead of Gelvira Pot-Stirrer is the closest to the Old Ford, and so many travellers spend the night under her roof. She has a huge bubbling stew-pot over a fire that never goes out; she keeps topping up the pot with more meat and vegetables and herbs whenever it runs low. Her guest-hall can sleep more than a score of travellers, and it is full some nights. Her husband brews beer and mead for their guests, and her daughters are acclaimed bakers. Many adventures begin with chance-meetings at the Hall of the Crossing.

Gelvira's position means she knows every regular traveller on the roads of Wilderland. She hears every rumour, and meets regularly with Beorn to bring him news of potential trouble. He considers her to be one of his most valuable advisors, and listens closely to her counsel.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Cooking, Folk-lore
Distinctive Features: Generous, Quick of Hearing
Relevant skills: Craft ♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 16

Ennalda the Spear-Maiden

Evil men murdered Ennalda's mother when she was young. Her father was a sell-sword, a wandering freebooter — sometimes a mercenary, sometimes a treasure-hunter, sometimes an outlaw — who taught her to fight at a young age. He left her in Beorn's house as a fosterling and went to seek his fortune in Dale, but never returned. She spent the last four years living under Beorn's roof.

Ennalda has grown into a fierce slayer, whose long spear is as swift and lethal as a thunderbolt. She has devoted herself to protecting Beorn and his homestead, and is always the first to defend her foster-father in battle or in debate. Her temper is almost as fearsome as her weapon. She is one of Beorn's spear-thanes, and he sends her as his emissary to far-flung homesteads.

Ennalda deeply mistrusts adventurers. She grew up with mercenaries and wanderers, and knows they are dangerous, untrustworthy sorts. If any adventurers visit Beorn's stead, then she keeps a close eye on them in case they make mischief.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Enemy-lore, Mirkwood-lore
Distinctive Features: Just, Stern, Vengeful
Relevant skills: Battle ♦♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦
Endurance: 19

Notable Places

The Carrock

The Carrock is a huge rock that sits in the middle of the Anduin, a short distance west of Beorn's House. The river flows around it on both sides, but a series of huge stepping stones leads to the muddy eastern shore. A small shallow cave bores into one side of the rock, next to a worn set of steps leading up to the flat surface above.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Return to the Carrock (Beornings only)

The Carrock is an important place to the Beornings, and making a pilgrimage to it renews their strength and bravery for the coming year. Returning to the Carrock lets a Beorning undertake to *Heal Corruption* using TRAVEL instead of CRAFT or SONG. This task can only be chosen by a Beorning if he has chosen to spend his Fellowship phase at home, or if the company repaired to Beorn's House.

The Carrock is a sacred place to the Beornings. Ceremonies and meetings are held there; trials, marriages, funerals, councils of war and celebrations of good fortune.

The rock is big enough to hold a few dozen people, which is enough for every Beorning settlement to send a representative but small enough so that everyone can be heard.

It is also a place of power. The roots of the Misty Mountains break through the mantle of the soil here. To stand atop the Carrock is to draw on the old power of the world, the wild nameless wilderness that existed before the Elves awoke in days of old.

The Old Ford

The Great River is changeable. When rainstorms or snowmelt feeds its tributaries like the Rushdown, the river can quicken and become impassable save by boat or via the stones of the Old Ford. The dwarf-road crossed the river here, over a stone bridge of their making. In later years, the men of the North Kingdom made it greater to hasten the passage of their armies. The bridge is gone now, leaving only a few stones worn smooth by the water, among which rest the fragments of a broken statue of a forgotten king.

Until recently, the Ford was a haunt of bandits and thieves, who would demand payment from some travellers and rob others. Now, the Beornings guard the ford (and the tolls are high, but at least no-one is robbed). There is even talk of building a new bridge over the Anduin, but such a project is beyond the skills of the Men of Anduin.

Opening the Old Ford as a Sanctuary

A dozen Beorning farmsteads, including Gelvira's Hall of the Crossing (see p. 39), are scattered within twenty miles of the ford, mainly to the north of the Road. This community is used to the passing of wanderers and traders, and thus welcomes adventurers with more warmth than the average Beorning settlement. Companions wishing to stay at the Old Ford regularly may choose to make the location a sanctuary. To do so, all companions must spend a first Fellowship phase there and choose the *Open New Sanctuary* undertaking (see p. 173 of the Loremaster's Guide).

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Guard the Old Ford

The Old Ford is the crossroads of Wilderland. A great many travellers pass through here every year, even in these dangerous and fearful times. Companions spending a Fellowship phase at the ford may help the Beornings in keeping the passage of the River safe, and maybe pick up gossip and news, make new friends, or possibly even get a few coins from crossing tolls. (Continues in the following page.)

If a character chooses to guard the Old Ford, roll on the table below.

ᚠ *Chance meeting:* You encounter a potential patron of note (like Gandalf, Radagast, or some other wanderer). You gain three bonus Success dice to spend during any one encounter with that notable figure, and may later undertake to gain them as a Patron.

1 *Nothing useful!*

2-3 *Good traffic:* Gain 3 Treasure.

4-5 *Busy days:* Gain 5 Treasure.

6-7 *Fruitful activity:* Gain an Advancement point in the Perception skill group.

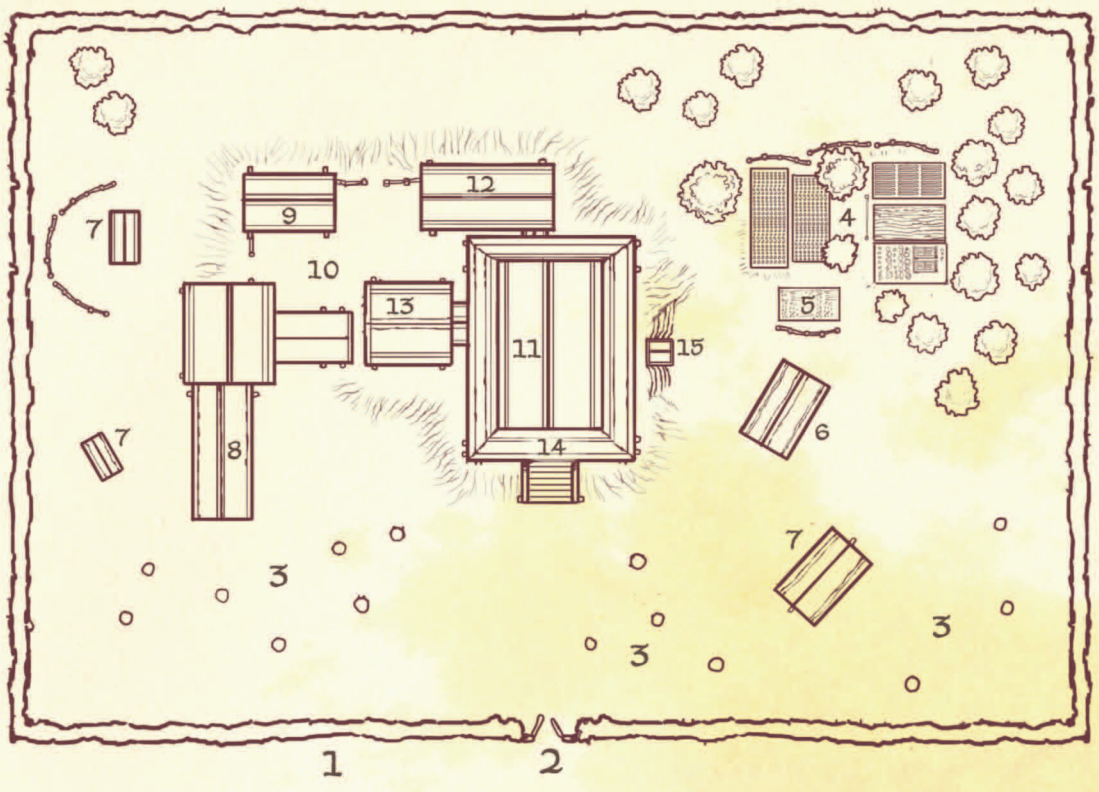
8-9 *Very fruitful activity:* Gain one Advancement point each in the Perception and Custom skill groups.

10 *News from afar:* You hear all sorts of news and gossip. You gain two bonus Success dice to spend during any one encounter in the coming Adventuring phase.

ᛟ *Bad news:* The Ford is attacked by outlaws, or Wargs, or another form of menace. You help in repelling the threat, but you are injured in the process. You begin the next Adventuring Phase suffering from a loss of 6 points of Endurance.

The House of Beorn

The House of Beorn has changed little since Thorin's company visited him. Many of his folk have settled nearby, but none within the belt of oak-trees and thorn-hedges that surround his stead. A gate in the hedge leads into the farmstead itself. Wondrous animals attend Beorn at his home. His servants are strangely intelligent horses, and sheep and cows who can understand the speech of men. Dogs, too, prowl around the outbuildings, and bears live in the woods nearby.

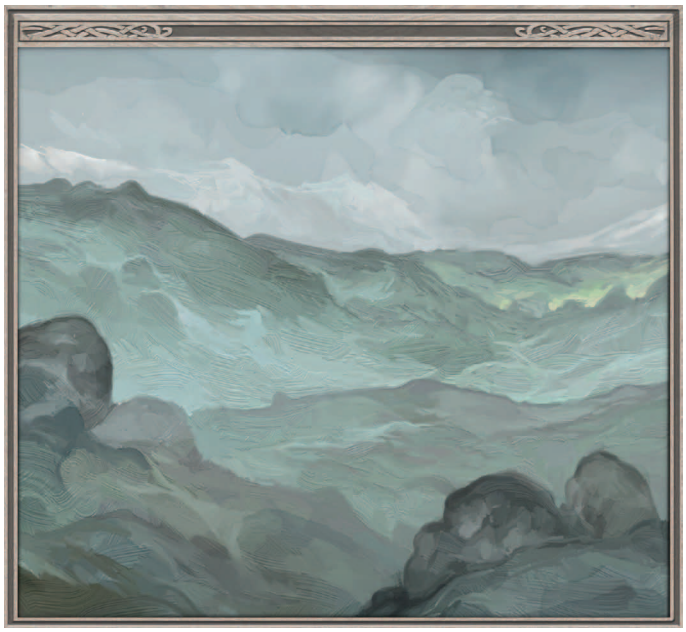


The House of Beorn

1. Thorn-Hedge
2. Main Gate
3. Bee Pastures
4. Vegetable Gardens
5. Herb Gardens
6. Barn
7. Outbuildings
8. Stables
9. Kennels
10. Courtyard
11. Beorn's hall
12. Beorn's Chambers
13. Guest-house
14. Veranda
15. Cellar

The Grey Heath

When Beorn was a young man, a long time ago, he followed a band of warriors in battle against forces loyal to the Necromancer. They fought a terrible battle on this heath, and were victorious though at great cost. After the battle, the bodies of the Orcs and the other crawling dead things were piled and burnt. Nothing has grown on that spot since, and the Beornings speak of eerie lights and strange sounds at night. As the power of Dol Guldur grows, the Necromancer's servants awaken once again.



Isle of Strangling Trees

The Isle of Strangling Trees is not much more than a green eyot emerging from the Great River thirty miles north of the Carrock. It is a perilous place, overrun with willows and gallows-weed. Branches hang over the river, trailing long strands of weed upon the waters. Boats that stray too close to the isle run the risk of getting caught and their crews

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Befriend the Beasts

Sometimes, trusted friends of Beorn are allowed to bring one of these magical animals with them on some important quest. A character that spends a Fellowship phase at Beorn's house may learn the ways of the wondrous animals and gain one of the following benefits:

- *Befriend a Pony:* One of Beorn's ponies agrees to accompany the character on his travels in the next Adventuring phase. This wondrous pony lets the hero roll the Feat die twice when making TRAVEL and AWARENESS rolls, and will follow the adventurer even into dark places underground.

- *Befriend a Hound:* For the next Adventuring phase, when the companion is making a roll using AWE, EXPLORE or HUNTING, he may roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result.

- *The Speech of Beasts:* The character learns to speak the secret tongue of one sort of animal – choose from Horses, Dogs, Bears, Wolves, Birds or Burrowing Beasts. Interpreting the speech of beasts requires a RIDDLE or SONG test.

strangled. The River-folk say they have glimpsed ruins on the island, suggesting that someone deliberately planted the gallows-weed upon the isle to keep the curious away.

Gallows-weed

If the company has played *The Marsh-bell*, they have probably already encountered this sinister plant (see the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 134). Even if they are aware of the danger posed by it, the weed hangs so thick around the isle that the steersman of a boat approaching it or passing by must pass an ATHLETICS test to steer away from the trailing strands (invocation of the *Boating* Trait results in an automatic success).

If the test is failed, the boat is caught and pulled ashore, while everyone on board must pass another ATHLETICS test or be seized by the drooping branches and pulled from the ground (or even underwater!).

The Cleft of Storms

The Cleft of Storms is a rocky height, a twin-horned hill that the locals call the Giant's Axe-cut. It stands close to the border of Mirkwood, forty miles north of the House of Beorn. Ancient stones piled on the top of both hilltops seem to suggest that the hills once rose as one, and that a fort stood up there.

If you stand here, between the rocky walls, you can feel the four winds blowing. You can smell the storm-clouds gathering above the Misty Mountains, and hear the thunder rolling across the bay in far-off Umbar. You can feel the lightning like a thousand bee-stings across your skull.

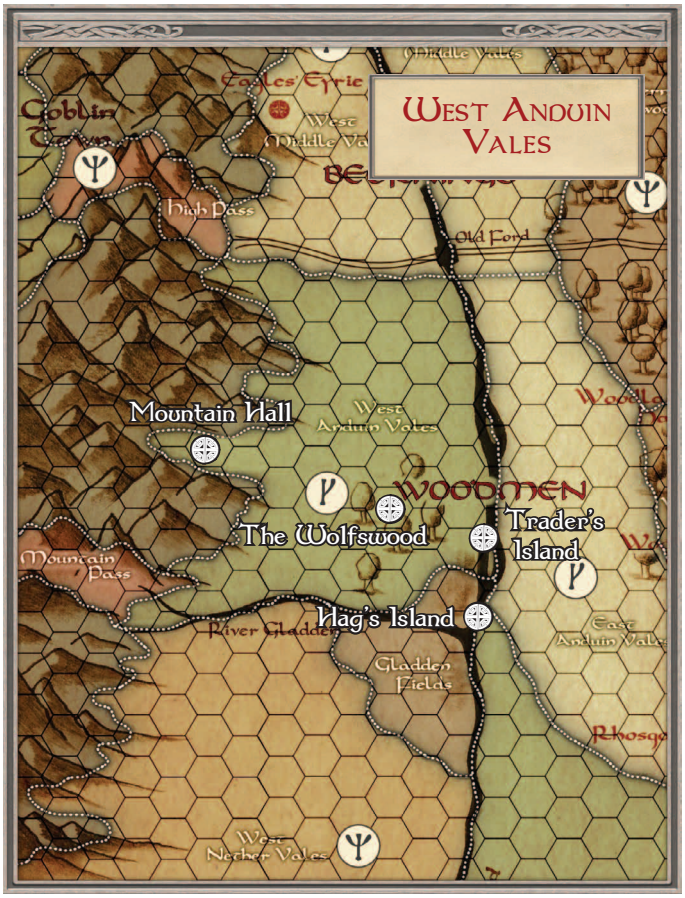
Those who know the secret of the cleft can use it to predict the weather; summer tempests or winter snowstorms can be spotted two or three days in advance. It is said that those of great will can seize control of the cleft and direct the weather as they wish, imposing their desires onto the wild whims of the sky.

West Anduin Vales

The West Anduin Vales are wild indeed. South of the Road, the land becomes much more difficult. The western part of the district is dominated by rolling hills; the east is a wilderness of rush-cloaked marshes and thickets.

The Woodmen of Mountain Hall are cousins and oathbrothers to the Woodmen of Mirkwood, and live in a long steep-sided valley near the head of the river Icewater. Their Mountain Hall — *Firienseld* in the language of the Vales of Anduin — is an easily defended *burg* in the shadow of the mountains, built atop their mines. It needs every wall and trench, as the Goblins often threaten the Hall.

To the south-east of the Hall, the land becomes more treacherous as you approach the River Gladden, so most traveller go north-east across the stony hills before turning east for the Great River or north for the Road, avoiding the middle-marshes.



The middle-marshes are not so tangled or confusing as the golden maze of the Gladden Fields, but can be hard going for a traveller. The River-folk live and fish in these marshes; they build small huts on stilts above the waters. The forest in the south of this region lies on a highland overlooking the Gladden Fields. Called the Wolfswood by the folk of the Vales, it is home to wolves and outlaws in great number.

Wildlife

The marshes of the east swarm with fish and birds, including the infamous corpse-eating Grim Hawks (see also the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111). The Woodmen of Woodland Hall keep herds of goats and sheep in their sheltered valleys, and breed sturdy mountain ponies. Wolves often slip down from the north to prey on the herds of the mountain-folk.

Inhabitants

For the most part, this land is empty and wild. A traveller who strays off the road is unlikely to meet another living soul within several days' journey. The only permanent settlement is the fortified burg of Mountain Hall in the west. The Woodmen and the River-folk may settle in a spot for a few years, but the threat of Orc attack from the warrens of the Misty Mountains forces them to stay nomadic.The Woodmen living in the area are a curious, unforthcoming folk. They are counted as one of the Houses of the Woodmen, but they differ from their forest kinsmen in many ways. They learned from the Dwarves in days of yore, and picked up something of their stubbornness and secrecy. They are not at home in the dark places of the wood as much as the Woodmen living under the eaves of Mirkwood, but are more willing to travel long distances under the sky.

The Woodmen of Mountain Hall

Players wanting to reflect the typical features of the Woodmen of the mountains when creating a new character may adopt the Common skill ratings listed below, and replace their Cultural blessing of *Woodcrafty* with *Mountain Fighters.*

Common Skills

Awe	0	Inspire	1	Persuade	0
Athletics	2	Travel	2	Stealth	0
Awareness	2	Insight	0	Search	2
Explore	3	Healing	3	Hunting	0
Song	1	Courtesy	0	Riddle	1
Craft	1	Battle	1	Lore	0

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Hunting Grim Hawks

Grim Hawks stand nearly eight feet tall on their spindly legs. Their features are a mottled grey-brown colour, and they are nearly always mangy and diseased. They cannot fly long distances, but stalk through the muddy waters and banks of the Great River like monstrous storks. Their flesh is not good to eat, but if their numbers grow too large, they become dangerous to all denizens of the Vales of Anduin, but especially to the River-folk.

Companions spending their Fellowship phase at Mountain Hall or nearby may contribute to the well-being of the Great River Vales by choosing this undertaking to go hunting with the River-folk. On a successful roll of HUNTING, a character is recognised as an *Éafolc-friend* and may employ the Trait to gain favour from the River-folk at any time. The Trait may be invoked during an encounter with any member of the éafolc, for example to be granted passage on a boat across the river or along it.

But the benevolence of the River-folk is a fleeting thing: if a year passes, or the Trait is used often in the same Adventuring phase (more than twice), the gratitude of the éafolc must be earned again, for example by returning to hunt the Grim Hawks.

Cultural Blessing: Mountain Fighters

The Woodmen of Firienseld have learned how to put the unforgiving features of the mountains to their advantage when they are involved in a fight.

- When the Woodmen fight in the mountains, they use their favoured Wits score as their basic Parry rating.

Notable Characters

Hartfast, son of Hartmut

The chieftain of Mountain Hall has been introduced in *Tales from Wilderland*, page 92. He is a proud warrior of more than fifty years, very tall even by Northmen standards, yet still able to wield an axe with purpose. He is a very practical man, almost as obstinate as a Dwarf, with no time to waste on foolish things like 'adventures'.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Goblin-lore, Mountaineer
Distinctive Features: Hardened, Suspicious (Elves), Wilful
Relevant skills: Awe ♦♦♦, Insight ♦♦♦, Axe ♦♦♦
Endurance: 18

Beranald, Doorwarden of Mountain Hall

Old Beranald has been in charge of meeting all who approach Mountain Hall by way of its narrow bridge since when Hartmut, father of Hartfast, was only a boy.

Anyone who has ever tried to enter the village bearing arms has been challenged by the words of Beranald, an ancient formula that was taught to him by the previous Doorwarden.

> *"Stay where you are, strangers. Your journey has led you here to seek our hall. I see you are warriors. I must ask who you are, in the name of Hartfast, head of the House of Mountain Hall."*

Beranald requires all those who want to enter Firienseld to leave their weapons in his custody. In case of trouble, a company of archers is quickly summoned, ready to deal with any threat.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Folk-lore, Old-lore
Distinctive Features: Cautious, Honourable
Relevant skills: Awe ♦♦♦, Insight ♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦
Endurance: 15

Notable Places

Mountain Hall

The main settlement of the Woodmen of the West Anduin Vales has been described in detail in *Tales from Wilderland*, starting from page 90. This is the best location in the West Anduin Vales for a company to choose as a sanctuary.

The Wolfswood

The Wolfswood is a forest of oak, ash and rowan, running to willow along the banks of the rivers. It is thick and tangled, but is still much more airy and welcoming than Mirkwood. The only horrors beneath these trees are the evils men bring with them. Four crumbling stone forts mark the edges of the Wolfswood on the north and west. These forts were built long ago as a defence against the Orcs, who once used the woods to shelter from the sunlight. The forts were abandoned many years ago, and are now covered in ivy and cracked by questing tree-roots. Only ghosts watch the Wolfswood now.

The Wolfswood has always been associated with outlaws and exiles, and many tales tell of brigands living in these forests. Heroes, too, have found shelter here — the Woodmen speak of a mythical heroine named Ivina of the Green, who fought the servants of the Enemy more than three thousand years ago when the Shadow ruled all Middle-earth from Mordor to the Sea.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Visit the Market at Trader's Isle

The markets of the River-folk are a supply of curiosities from the length of the Anduin. Companions spending a Fellowship phase in Mountain Hall can go visit the éafolc's market. When heroes choose this undertaking, they spend 1 Treasure to make a roll on the table below. A hero possessing the *Folk-lore* Trait or who is an *Éafolc-friend* (see page 44) must roll too, but considers any result different from an as if it was a ᚠ.

ᚠ	Choose an item of any type except *Mab's Liquor*, or roll again.
1	*Nothing useful!* You bought something that either broke very soon, or proved completely ineffective. Better luck next time!
2-3	*Food and Drinks.* You spent your money drinking and playing games with the éafolc: the next time you visit their market, you will roll on the table twice and pick a result.
4-5	*Southern Wine.* You bought yourself three bottles of southern wine. You may open one during a future encounter to raise its Tolerance rating by +2. Raise it by +4 if the people you meet are Elves or Men from the South.
6-7	*Good bargain.* You found furs and wares that you may sell at three times their cost at the market of Lake-town: you may invest up to 5 Treasure, and receive three times that amount the next time you go to Esgaroth.
8-9	*River-charm.* You bought a lucky amulet of the éafolc. For the length of the following Adventuring phase, if you are inside the Vales of Anduin you may spend 1 Hope to roll again if you get an Feat die result.
10	*Mab's Liquor.* For your money you got a leathern flask containing three sips of an amber liquid, concocted by Mab the Spinner. Sipping from the flask restores a number of Endurance points equal to the drinker's Wisdom or Valour score (the highest) plus the roll of a Success die.
	You have been tricked by the River-folk! You got something for your gold, but at a higher price: spend another point of Treasure and roll again (if you don't have any Treasure left, you cannot roll again and have received a worthless trinket).

She hid in the wood, and sallied forth to raid the forces of the Enemy. Other old stories tell that an Elf-prince once went hunting in the Wolfswood with nine companions, all riding fair white horses and bedecked in armour of silver and gold, but they never returned. The River-folk swear that on still nights, you can hear their hunting horns blowing desperately in the distance.

Trader's Island

Trader's Island is a refuge of the River-folk. It is one of the larger islands in the Anduin; the river splits around a rocky outcropping like the Carrock, and a long sandy spit has formed downstream of the rock. Stunted trees and long grasses bind the island together, but the ground is not always safe, and unwary travellers may blunder into soft sand or mud with little warning. There are usually several éafolc families camped on the isle, for they use it as a meeting-place and trading post. Persistent rumours claim that there is a huge cache of buried treasure somewhere on the island, a hoard accumulated by many generations of thieving River-folk.

Hag's Island

Hag's Island lies just north of the meeting of the Gladden and the Anduin rivers. It is a small tree-covered lump of earth in the middle of the rushing waters, with dangerous rapids on the east side. The island is said to be the home of an evil monster, the River Hag, and certainly many visitors to the isle have vanished mysteriously. At times, especially in summer, impenetrable river-mists surround the island, and boats that try to make for the safer western passage find themselves shipwrecked on the rapids of the east channel.

East Anduin Vales

A visitor to this part of the Vales of Anduin would be forgiven for thinking that this land is empty. The land rolls on for hundreds of miles beside the river, endless green valleys running down to the Great River. To the east is the ever-present shadow of the forest like a black stain on the horizon.

While few people live here, the land remembers them. There were kingdoms here, long ago, and armies watered the soil with their blood. The visitor must clamber over ruined stone walls, or perhaps make camp amid the barely-visible foundations of some old village. The tumbledown remains of ringforts crown every large hill from the Old Ford to the Undeeps and Elven paths run along the border of Mirkwood for many miles.

The Woodmen of Mirkwood live in this region — or at least their herds do. Their villages lie deep in the forest, but they keep herds of cattle and sheep in the open dales. Young men and women tend to the herds with the help of dogs, and run back to the shelter of the forest when threatened.

Wildlife

Some of the denizens of Mirkwood, like the black boars and stags, emerge from the darkness of the forest and cross the vales here, but they are a rare sight. More commonly encountered are the usual wildlife of the Anduin valley, like foxes, badgers, otters, wild ponies and sheep. Hunting Eagles from the Eyrie often cross the river in search of prey. The Woodmen of Mirkwood let their animals graze in the valleys of this region. They maintain pens and herder's cabins close to the edge of the forest.

Inhabitants

Long ago, Northmen lived in this region. They dwelt in the open, and hewed wood from the forest to build their homes. Then Orcs and evil Men out of Dol Guldur attacked from the south, and many wars were fought by the forest eaves. During the Watchful Peace, the Shadow withdrew from Dol Guldur, but the Necromancer's mortal servants were still at large.

The Northmen chose to move into the forest, which back then was not so terrible and tainted as it is today, and became Woodmen. They still consider these lands theirs, and when the Shadow is finally defeated, they may leave the shelter of the forest and settle here again.

While they do not live in the open, the Woodmen are busy in this land. They make boats and rafts down by the river, so they can cross to Mountain Hall or trade with the River-folk. The Woodmen do not love the Great River, preferring the sheltered waters of the Dusky River that runs by their home, but they respect its power. There are hidden caches all along the river-banks here, with small boats concealed beneath bracken or flowering reeds.

The Woodmen also grow vegetables and other crops in small gardens near the forest eaves. They do not rely on these fields, though — long and bitter experience has taught them that fields of waving grain burn all too quickly when invaders come.

Two other groups live in this region. The first are the people called the Erringmen. They are a sparse and wandering folk, descended from a fierce people that once served Dol Guldur. These *Balchoth* — an Elvish name signifying 'Cruel People' — came from the east riding in chariots and wains and bringing great damage upon Gondor, until they were defeated at the Battle of the Fields of Celebrant. Most of the Balchoth were slain, but a few survivors fled across the Anduin. The majority of the survivors returned to the east, but the ancestors of the Erringmen went north instead, following the River. In time, they mingled with the Northmen, and abandoned many of the ways of their cruel kin.

The Erringmen — their name means the Wandering People — travel in wagons drawn by oxen. They move slowly, meandering like the river, bringing with them large herds of cattle. They are doughty warriors, preferring axes and bows to swords. Their champions and leaders fight from chariots, which they decorate with gold and intricate carvings to show prestige and wealth. The Woodmen mistrust the Erringmen, but permit them to pass through

their lands. While some of the Erringmen have fallen back on old ways and once again serve the Enemy, most are free of the Shadow.

The other group living in this land are newcomers. When Dol Guldur fell before the White Council just a few years ago, many slaves escaped its pits and dungeons and fled north. The forest was a place of horrors for them, so they settled in the East Anduin Vales a day's ride west of Woodmen-town. Most of the freed slaves are human, though there are Dwarves and even Elves among them. Many of them have no homes to return to, for their kin all perished in the black pits of the Necromancer.

Notable Characters

Ash

The Elf-woman named Ash is the leader of the free slaves. She is not an Elf of Mirkwood, and does not speak of her past. She endured centuries of torment in the pits of Dol Guldur — she was captured by the Enemy uncounted years ago, long before the Watchful Peace, to wring a precious secret out of her. Now, it is in the power of the Elves to perish when faced with terrible torment, for they shall be reborn in the Undying Lands. Ash chose to remain — out of love for the wild lands, or out of pride, none can say. The Wood-elves suspect that her sufferings drove her mad. Great power is in her, but also great anger and sorrow.

Attribute level: 8
Specialities: Shadow-lore, Elven-lore
Distinctive Features: Grim, Proud, Wary
Relevant skills: Awe ♦♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦♦, Song ♦♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 20

Valderic

Valderic is a wagon-captain of the Erringmen. His Easterling heritage is strong — he is shorter than the average Northman, sallow of skin, and heavily built. The Woodmen mock him, calling him halfling, half-man. They are careful not to say this to his face, for Valderic is quick to laugh, but quicker to anger. He has long felt attracted by the Shadow, and since the fall of Dol Guldur he has twice dared to enter the fortress to look for relics and treasures. Some whisper that Valderic has been able to learn sorcery, and that he can now command the spirits of the dead. Certainly, his chariot is decorated with the skulls of his fallen foes, and strange lights can be seen at night glowing within his wagon.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Beast-lore, Shadow-lore
Distinctive Features: Curious, Fierce, Hardened
Relevant skills: Explore ♦♦♦, Search ♦♦♦
Endurance: 21

Iwmud the Goatherd

Old Iwmud has tended the Woodman herds of the Vales for many years. The Northmen of Mirkwood see anyone who lives in the open as eccentric, and Iwmud is certainly that. He talks to the trees and the goats, and sings in his own strange language to himself as he watches the herds. He also has a number of curious friends, foreigners from distant lands who stay at his shack for a few nights before carrying on north or south. It is even said that Eagles can often be seen circling over Iwmud's home, although who can say if they are watching him or guarding him? Iwmud is certainly more than he seems; he could be a secret agent of Gandalf — or a spy for the Enemy.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Leechcraft, Smoking
Distinctive Features: Clever, Patient, Secretive
Relevant skills: Lore ♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦, Song ♦♦
Endurance: 15

Mansbane

The creature known as Mansbane is probably a troll of some sort, perhaps a Hill-Troll that grew strong and fell in the pits of Dol Guldur. No-one has ever seen it and lived, but the devastation left in its wake is plain to see. The beast appears, ravages a settlement or a camp, killing everyone present, then vanishes into the night. Despite its apparent size, the best trackers have been unable to follow its trail, as though the beast took to the air after its atrocities.

Mansbane's attacks have increased since Dol Guldur's fall; Radagast wonders if the monster was in the thrall of the Necromancer, and now that its master is gone, the beast is free to ravage and despoil. It has never been encountered in the forest, but has attacked the Woodmen from the Nether Vales to the Forest Gate.

Notable Places

The Village of Stonyford

Stonyford, (*Stánford* in the language of the Vales) is the southernmost settlement of the Beornings beyond the Old Forest Road. Here a stone tower once stood, and a ford to cross the river. Of the tower only a pile of stones remain, and the ford has long gone. (Stonyford, the village elder Hartwulf and his daughter Ava are introduced in the *Kinstrife & Dark Tidings* adventure contained in *Tales from Wilderland*).

The Long Barrows

The Northmen of old laid their kings to rest in the Long Barrows. These mounds crowned in *simbelmynë*, the white Evermind flower, hold the honoured dead from the earliest days. It is said that the oldest mound is the tomb of a great lord who led his people out of the north to settle along the Anduin and was counted among the Wise.

Atop the barrows is a complicated arrangement of earthworks and standing stones. Those who can understand the movement of the heavens say that these stones form an astronomical calendar, and that the changes of the seasons and the turning of the years can be predicted by studying the stones and the shadows they cast upon the land. At times of turmoil, the stones may even be used to predict the future by those with the lore to read them.

Stonehallow

Stonehallow is an ancient fortification in the middle of the East Anduin Vales. It was once a Dwarven quarry, dug to build the Old Forest Road. The stone-hungry Dwarves created a huge steep-sided gash in the hillside, and Men later built walls along the edges of the gash and towers to guard it. Now, it is a refuge for the Woodmen who cannot reach the forest in time of war. The caves at the back of Stonehallow contain provisions, and the open space of the old quarry is large enough to hold thousands of animals. When danger threatens, the herders drive their animals through the gates of Stonehallow, then man the walls.

The Woodmen always station a few brave warriors at Stonehallow, to keep the place in good repair and to ensure that no outlaws or Orcs conquer the refuge and deny it to them. By the standards of the Dwarves or the Men of the South, Stonehallow is like a child's model of a defensive redoubt, but it serves its purpose for the Woodmen.

Pale Rider Caves

The Pale Rider Caves lie a short distance south of the Old Forest Road. The hills in this area are white and chalky. Old pits scar the surface of the hills, where the Dwarves and later the Northmen dug for making lime. Some forgotten tribe of Northmen cut the image of a horse and rider into the side of a green hill, and that landmark is visible for miles around. Tales say that one day, the horse and rider will come to life and ride to the aid of the Free Peoples.

Today, though, the Pale Rider serves as a dire warning. At the time of the Great Plague, a cruel king ordered that all those infected with the sickness be driven into the caves and walled up, so their sickness might be contained within. The ghosts of the angry dead still haunt the caves, and the Woodmen say that the touch of a ghost brings the marks of the plague upon its victim.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Compete on the Field of Heroes (Woodmen Only)

Woodmen companions spending a fellowship phase in any one of the Woodmen settlements of Mirkwood may complete on the Field of Heroes to gain renown in front of their peers.

When a hero chooses this undertaking, he attempts to gain the opportunity to raise his Standing rating at a modified cost. To do so, he must select and roll one of the following skills: ATHLETICS, HUNTING, BOWS or AXES. On a success, the cost of increasing Standing is reduced by 3, a great success reduces it by 6, and an extraordinary success by 12.

Field of Heroes

The Field of Heroes is a flat, stony area in the south of the Vales, near the path that leads to Rhosgobel. The Woodmen rarely fight pitched battles, preferring to hide within the forest and ambush their enemies, but when they must face enemies openly they do so here. Four times in living memory a force of Woodmen has met forces of the Shadow in battle here, and three times they have been victorious. In the summer, the Woodmen practise fighting here, and hold tournaments of arms, foot races, and archery.

The Elftower

This lonely tower of ivory stone was once a watchtower on the road to the land of Oropher, the Elvenking, in the days when the Woodland Realm extended over the whole forest. It was abandoned long ago, but so solid are its foundations or so powerful the spells that were laid upon them that it still stands intact. For many centuries, sheep grazed inside its curtain walls and the tower was nothing more than a strange landmark in an empty land, and people called it *Elfengard*.

Two years after Dol Guldur fell, a strange Man took up residence in the tower. He claims to be the Necromancer's former apprentice, and a band of Orcs and evil Men serve him out of fear, believing that he has inherited the power of his dread master. He has tried to convince the folk of the East Nether Vales to serve him, but so far they have refused. He has therefore turned his eye towards the Woodmen. He fancies that if he could slay the wizard Radagast, then surely the people of the wood would bow to him. For the moment his presence is unknown by most of those who live in the Vales, but he will soon make his move.

Gladden Fields

As the River Gladden spills into the Anduin, it creates a water-logged landscape of ponds, little slow-flowing channels and marshes called the Gladden Fields. The marshes are not especially perilous or unpleasant – this land knew the Elves, long ago, and their blessing lingers here. In summer, the fields become fields of gold and streams of silver as flowers bloom on the banks and fish leap in the waters. However, travelling at speed through the marshes is impossible. A traveller who chooses not to march around the marshes must either use a flat-bottomed boat, or resign himself to struggling in and out of sucking mud.

These marshes have always been deserted. No great kingdoms ever claimed the region, so it has always been left to the poor and the forgotten. For much of the Third Age, Hobbits lived in the Gladden Fields. Eventually, most of them migrated over the mountains into Eriador, but the Marshes were never wholly abandoned. As the Shadow grew in Mirkwood, agents of the Enemy occupied the Gladden Fields, driving out the existing residents. The presence of Orcs and other fell beasts has not diminished the beauty of this land, but make it even more dangerous.

Wildlife

Fish thrive in the shallow waters of the Gladden Fields feeding on insects and worms wriggling through the mud. Many species of bird also nest here – a loud noise fills the sky with startled birds. Otters burrow in the muddy banks.

There are a few dangerous creatures in the marshes. Grim Hawks stalk through the reeds in the east of the Gladden Fields, while the middle reaches of the river are home to many species of poisonous serpents and fat black blood-sucking leeches. The brownish waters may conceal stranger beasts — legends speak of swamp boars as big as houses, of slimy monsters lurking in brackish waters, of wisps and boggins and sneeps.

Inhabitants

River-folk and Woodmen do not live in the Gladden Fields, but they do camp along its edges when fishing or bird-hunting. There are several hillocks in the region that make good camping grounds, as the ground there is dry and solid. Other humans do live in the fields — outcasts, hermits and trappers for the most part, as well as fugitives from the East Nether Vales who fled Dol Guldur.

Orcs and Goblins dwell in the central part of the marshes. Low mists cloak the Gladden Fields at times, and the Orcs use them to hide from the light of the sun. The Orc-chieftains always have trouble keeping their followers in line in the marshes; fishermen often find Goblins floating face-down in the streams.

The Woodmen also have legends of the Tree-people, a race of men who they believe lived in Mirkwood before them. The Tree-people are said to be gnarled and brown-skinned, resembling old men and women even in their youth. They can turn themselves into tree-shape, and in this form are almost indistinguishable from the trees around them. If you are very clever and very lucky, you can spot the faces of the Tree-people peering out of the bark. Stories say that most of the Tree-people left Mirkwood when the Shadow fell upon it, and migrated across the Anduin to the Wolfswood and the Gladden Fields. Woodmen passing the Gladden Fields on the way to the Mountain Hall point at particularly human-looking trees and wonder if they sometimes walk.

Wild Hobbits of the Vales of Anduin

Many people believe wild Hobbits to be nothing more than children's stories, but the truth is that a few halflings still live in the region about the Gladden Fields. They don't live in comfortable Hobbit-holes, but hide under the eaves of Mirkwood or dig a refuge along the river-bank for a night and move on. They have little contact with the humans of the region; the dangers of Wilderland have turned them into a secretive, shy folk, quite unlike their sedentary, settled cousins of Eriador. They play little part in the affairs of the region, and consider most humans to be as dangerous and oversized as Orcs. Only a few trustworthy people, mostly River-folk, know where these halflings make their home.

A player desiring to create a wild Hobbit character may adopt the Common skill ratings listed on the following page, and replace their Cultural blessing of *Hobbit-sense* with *Shadow-sight*. As specialties are concerned, *Smoking* is replaced by *Fishing*. Finally, while all Cultural Virtues of the Shire-folk are normally available to wild Hobbits, their Cultural Rewards are not. Wild Hobbits are considered a *frugal* folk.

Common Skills

Awe	0	Inspire	1	Persuade	0
Athletics	2	Travel	0	Stealth	3
Awareness	2	Insight	1	Search	2
Explore	2	Healing	1	Hunting	2
Song	1	Courtesy	1	Riddle	2
Craft	0	Battle	0	Lore	0

Cultural Blessing: Shadow-sight

The wild Hobbits of the Vales of Anduin who survived the coming of the Shadow over Mirkwood have been made tougher by the experience, and are more aware of its threats. They have learned to recognise the presence of its minions and the traces of his devilry.

- When a wild Hobbit makes a HUNTING or AWARENESS roll to track or perceive the proximity of an evil creature or a servant of the Shadow, he adds his Attribute score to the result, as if enjoying an Attribute bonus. Additionally, when making a Corruption test to resist the taint of a blighted place, wild Hobbits can roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result.

Notable Characters

Arciryas, Servant of Saruman

Arciryas is a man of Gondor. He was once a Healer in Minas Tirith, and learned the arts of herbalism and chirugery in the Houses of Healing. His curiosity led him to consult old, musty scrolls in the archives, scrolls that spoke of the atrocities and evil spells worked by the Enemy. Arciryas saw many warriors of Gondor who were wounded by Orc-poison and other devices, and believed he could heal them if only he learned their secrets. When his research could go no further, he went to the Tower of Orthanc and consulted with Saruman the White, who had himself long studied the arts of the Enemy.

Arciryas never returned to Gondor. Today, he lives in the Gladden Fields. He is a student of herb-lore, and says that the medicinal properties of the many plants that grow in the marshes must be catalogued. He is devoted to his work, spending long days wandering the wilderness, poking under reeds with his long white staff. He travels south to Isengard every few months to report to the White Wizard. Sometimes, he suspects that Saruman has another purpose in mind for him, beyond searching the fields for herbs and roots. The people of Mountain Hall know of Arciryas, and call upon his expertise for wounds that they cannot heal.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Enemy-lore, Herb-lore
Distinctive Features: Lordly, Steadfast
Relevant skills: Lore ♦♦♦♦, Healing ♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 20

Byrgol

In the Gladden Fields, a brave Hobbit is usually a dead Hobbit. This is not the Shire, protected by Rangers and Wizards — this is the Wild. If a Hobbit is caught by an Orc or even a Man, his fate is likely to be a grim one. Therefore, wise wild Hobbits hide in the undergrowth when the Big Folk go by, and stay almost invisible in the shadows.

Byrgol is a brave Hobbit. He found a sword in a wrecked boat — it's really more of a long knife — and stole it. He's proved surprisingly successful in battle — a well-placed stab from below has emptied the guts of more than a few Orcs.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Tunnelling, Fishing
Distinctive Features: Eager, Reckless, Nimble
Relevant skills: Stealth ♦♦♦♦, Travel ♦♦, Sword ♦♦
Endurance: 13

Notable Places

Dwimmerhorn

The fortress of Dwimmerhorn stands on a huge stone that rises from the waters of the Gladden Fields like the half-buried skull of some primordial titan. There is only one safe path that winds around and up the steep sides of the rock to the fortress above, and that path is guarded by

Orcs and Wargs. The fortress is — or was — an outpost of Dol Guldur, established hundreds of years ago to aid in Sauron's search for the Ring. Now, renegade Orcs and evil Men inhabit it.

The Dwimmerhorn is an evil place. The Necromancer's servants built a dread temple atop the rock, dedicated to the dark powers, and the land around it is tainted by its presence. If Sauron ever recovered his Ring, then this taint would spread over all the world.

Holes of the Wild Hobbits

The villages and holes of the Hobbits are long abandoned and waterlogged, inhabited only by badgers and voles. Some were still in use up until relatively recently. The River-Hobbits were never as wealthy or sophisticated as their cousins in the Shire, but they collected curiosities and trinkets from Wilderland. Gollum said that his Grandmother had 'many Elven-rings', and while this was doubtless a lie, there may be magic treasures left in the mud of a half-collapsed Hobbit pantry.

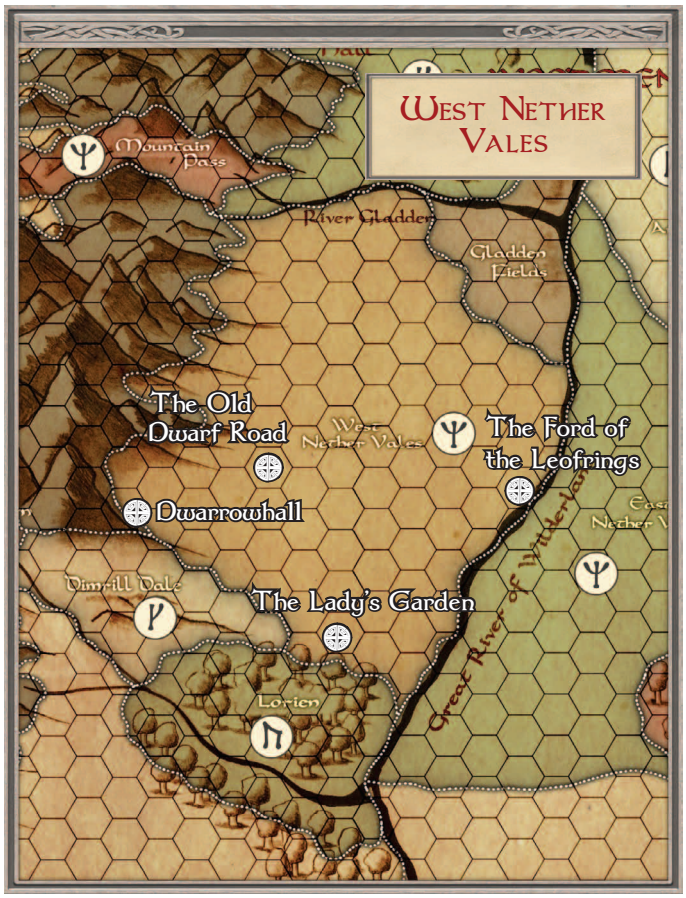
West Nether Vales

The desolate plains of the West Nether Vales seem endless on first sight. Even from the heights of the Misty Mountains, the Anduin is only a distant ribbon of silver, and many leagues of emptiness lie in between. The east portion makes for good grazing or farmland, but the farms of the Northmen that once stood here were swallowed up by the grass long ago. The western wold is a landscape of small wooded thickets and limestone hills rising up to the granite of the Misty Mountains.

The Gladden marks the northern border of the West Nether Vales. To the south, the land climbs towards the stony highlands of the Dimrill Dale, or enters the tree-shrouded valley of the Golden Wood where no traveller dares go.

Wildlife

The western region is especially empty of life. A traveller might spot a coney, or a crow, or maybe a sullen bear in one of the little woods. To the east, where the land is richer, there are grazing herds of wild horses and cattle, as well as deer and the wolf packs that prey on them.



Inhabitants

Once, this region was the granary of Khazad-Dûm, the great city of the Dwarves under the Misty Mountains. Many Northmen worked the land as landtillers and herdsmen, and provided the Dwarves with food in exchange for their work as builders, smiths and miners. They lived in scattered homesteads, until the Dwarves helped them build a town close to the mountains that they named Dwarrowhall. The town and the surrounding farms were abandoned in the years after the fall of the mines — once Khazad-Dûm was deserted, there was no market for the Northman farmers, and they diminished, as many struck out east and north in search of new homes.

Today, the Orcs are the only permanent denizens of the West Nether Vales. They have secret lairs in the mountains, guarding the approaches to the Redhorn Pass and the *Firiengate*, the other passage that crosses the Misty Mountains at the source of the River Gladden. They rarely come into the lowlands except when commanded to do so by some greater power.

In years past, the Northman tribe known as the Leofrings lived in this land, but Orcs from Dol Guldur attacked and drove them away into the south. Since the Battle of Five Armies, a few of them have returned, and more migrate north every year. They fear the enchantments of the Golden Wood, so they come up along the Dimrill Dale.

Notable Characters

Arnulf the Leofring

Arnulf was one of the survivors of the attack on Dwarrowhall in 2940. His whole family was slain — or worse, captured — by the Orcs of Dol Guldur. The loss drove him mad. Unlike the other Leofrings, he does not travel the Vales of Anduin during the year; instead, he lives in the ruins of Dwarrowhall, sharpening his axe and plotting revenge. Ghosts beset him, and sometimes Arnulf is a danger to anyone who comes too close, for he may mistake them for Orcs or spectres of the dead and attack them. At other times, he welcomes enemies of the Enemy to Dwarrowhall. He knows the ruins better than any other Leofring, and has discovered a network of Dwarf tunnels under the city. These tunnels are mostly clogged with earth and fallen debris, but he has excavated some of the ones around his home and uses them to sneak around the ruins.

The Leofrings

The people of Leof are close kin to the folk of Rohan. They are descended from followers of Eorl who strayed during the migration south. They are nomads, wandering through all the Vales of Anduin in search of good grazing for their herds. Unlike most Northmen of the Vales of Anduin, the Leofrings have preserved their ancestors' superior horsmanship, a skill so legendary that the Dwarves once thought the Éothéod were half-horse, half-men.

The Leofrings have a great dread of forests, especially Mirkwood, and consider it bad luck to walk beneath the trees. They travel in cohorts of a dozen families or so, led by a headman. These cohorts wander through the Vales, travelling as far south as the borders of Rohan and as far north as the Gore, but they all return to Dwarrowhall for the Yuletide every year. Most of them dwell west of Anduin.

In years past, they were friends of the Woodmen, but as the power of Dol Guldur grew, some of the Leofrings chose to bow before the Shadow and traded with the folk of the East Nether Vale. They sold horses to them, and some Leofrings even entered into the service of the Necromancer. Then, a year before the Battle of Five Armies, a host of Orcs attacked the Leofrings as they gathered at Dwarrowhall, and they fled the North.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Enemy-lore, Anduin-lore
Distinctive Features: Crazy, Vengeful
Relevant skills: Stealth ♦♦♦♦, Explore ♦♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦
Endurance: 18

Haldir of Lórien

The Elves of Lórien dwell deep in the Golden Wood, and have little traffic with outsiders. There are still a few of them who leave the forest to gather news and watch for enemies. Haldir is one of these. He is one of the few Elves who speaks the Common Tongue fluently.

Sometimes, he visits the camps of the Leofrings or the River-folk with his brothers Rúmil and Orophin, for there are some among them who welcome Elves. These are not Elf-friends, but simply good-hearted people willing to bring the Elves news from the outside world.

Attribute level: 8
Specialities: Enemy-lore, Folk-lore
Distinctive Features: Keen-Eyed, Suspicious
Relevant skills: Awareness ♦♦♦♦, Stealth ♦♦♦♦, Great Bow ♦♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 20

Notable Places

Dwarrowhall

Dwarrowhall lies in a mountain fold north of Dimrill Dale. The town once thrived, but is now home to only a few Men. The Leofrings are not a numerous people, and when they stay here they fill less than half the town. The great granaries once used to store food for the Dwarves of Moria are now hollow ruins, but some of the small stone houses that the Northmen built with the aid of Dwarf stonemasons are still mostly habitable.

The walls encircling Dwarrowhall are also mostly intact; the Leofrings have filled the few gaps with piled stones, as they cannot repair the Dwarven stonework. They also built a wooden gatehouse to defend the entrance to the town, as well as an enclosure for horses outside the walls, for the riders are not comfortable riding along the narrow cobbled streets.

Dwarrowhall was plundered by Orcs several times in its history, and there is no treasure or beauty left in the town. It is a place of shelter, nothing more.

The Ford of the Leofrings

The Ford of the Leofrings is a sheltered spot where they cross the Great River. When the River is low, the horses can swim across the waters in moderate safety. At other times, the Leofrings use low-sided rafts that they push across the river with long poles and ropes. The Leofrings have little love for the water, and fear the river's wrath.

However, crossing points for horses and wagons are few and far between on the Anduin, so they guard this ford with all their might. Even when most of the Leofrings are away in the south, they always leave a few warriors here to secure their claim on the Ford.

Agents of Dol Guldur watch the ford closely and report any large movements to their masters in the forest. Travellers from Dol Guldur use this place to cross the Anduin without trespassing into the land of the Beornings. In the years before the fall of the Necromancer, many ill-favoured folk gathered here, and the Leofrings feared they would attack the ford. Now, without the power of Dol Guldur to threaten them, the Leofrings are once again secure.

The Old Dwarf Road

The Dwarves built the fortress of Dimrill Watch to protect the last stretch of the ancient Dwarf-road that ran from the east gate of Moria north to the Old Ford and then on

to Mirkwood. Few traces of this road survive, although a traveller may sometimes happen onto an oddly straight ridge in the wilderness and follow it for a time.

Dimrill Watch still stands on the northern border of Dimrill Dale. The fortress rises from the eastern foothills of the Misty Mountains, and is mostly intact, for Dwarf-wrought stone endures long after its builders departed. Orcs out of Moria sometimes use the fortress as a base for raids into the West Nether Vales or Lorien, but dare not dwell there for long, out of fear of Dwarven ghosts that are said to haunt the fortress.

The Lady's Garden

The Lady's Garden is a region on the edge of the Golden Wood. A stream flows out from the mountains and tumbles down into a sheltered dell, where many strange and beautiful flowers grow. This place was clearly inhabited at one point, for there are carved benches and paths of crushed white stone. A single seat, like a throne, sits in the centre of this curious garden. In times past, it is said that the Enchantress of the Golden Wood received visitors here and wove her spells upon them.

The Elves of Lórien rarely stray from their home deep in the woods, but the Lady's power lingers. No evil thing may enter the Garden.

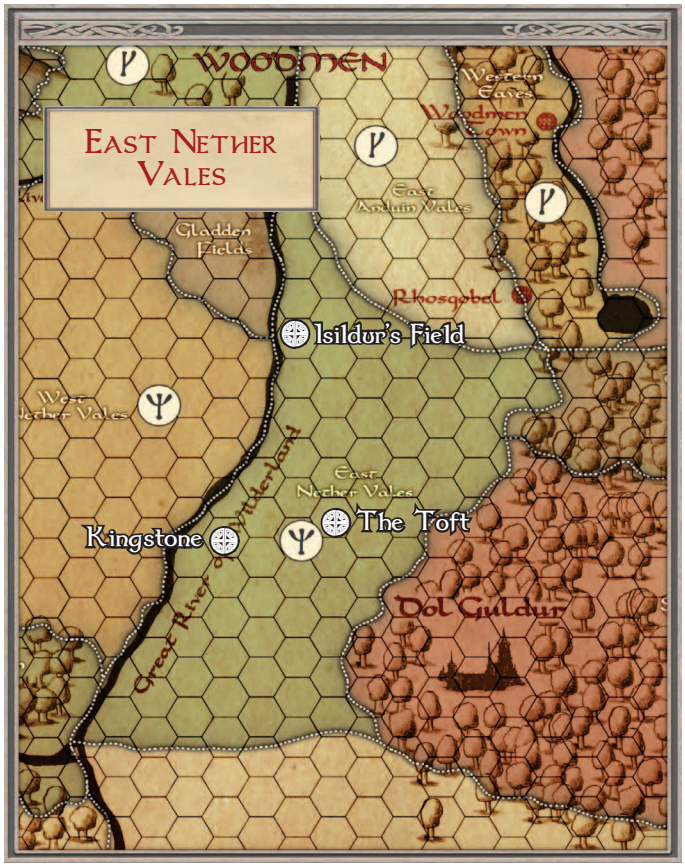
East Nether Vales

Some lands are blessed by those who dwell in them, like the lands of the Elves, and some are made wonderful by long toil, like the cities of the Dwarves. Others, though, are naturally blessed with fertility and temperate weather and beauty. The Shire of the Hobbits is one such place. So too are the East Nether Vales — of all the lands of the river north of Rauros, these regions are perhaps the most beautiful and the richest.

Many wars were fought for their possession; these Vales were part of the Kingdom of Rhovanion, and were then conquered by the Wainriders out of the East. Later, the attacks of the Balchoth were so vicious that the Nether Vales were wholly depopulated and abandoned, but in the centuries that followed the victory at the Fields of Celebrant, they were re-colonised. Unfortunately, these new settlers soon fell under the shadow of Dol Guldur. The dread fortress of the Necromancer lies only a few miles within the forest, and its darkness leeches into the surrounding territory. Those who stayed here were forced to choose — swear fealty and pay tribute to Dol Guldur, or leave.

Today, people still dwell in the East Nether Vale; in fact, this might be the most densely populated part of the Vales of Anduin, although that says little in these empty times.

All those who live here, however, chose to bow to the Shadow. The beauty and bounty of the land seems unnatural, and all that they achieve is somehow empty. Most of the inhabitants live in a village called the *Toft*, in a land of wooded hills and fertile plains. The Toft supplied many of the needs of those who dwelt in the fortress of Dol Guldur when the Necromancer was there. Now that the Hill of Sorcery is empty, the folk of the Toft look to the future with trepidation, for they have become used to servitude and dread.



The northern region, near Rhosgobel, is called the *Run*, and it is an empty land. It looks welcoming at first glance, but bands of Orcs often emerged from the Narrows of the Forest to despoil it. Now, the land is claimed by the men of the Tyrant's Hill, a fortress that lies just inside the forest eaves (see page 107).

West of the Run is the *Neck*. A ridge of steep-sided hills dominates this land, running between the Forest and the River. Marshes pool at the feet of these hills. It was here that Isildur fell in battle, and the Ring was lost in the waters of the Great River.

The southern toe of the land, closest to Lórien, is called the *Strifelands*. No men dwell here. Huge flocks of crows circle endlessly over the broken, rocky landscape, save only when a storm blows down from the north. On stormy days, it is as though two giants made of lightning and thunder strive against each other, one on the west side of the river and one — darker and more terrible — reaching out of the east.

Wildlife

The western Vales are home to cattle and horses, as well as thousands of swans in the marshy Neck running along the east bank opposite the Gladden Fields. That region is also home to alarming swarms of blood-sucking or stinging insects that rise up in huge clouds to beset travellers. The wandering Erringmen carry fire-pots full of stinking incense when they must pass through this region.

The southern Vales show something of the taint of Mirkwood. Many animals in that region have jet-black fur or feathers. Huge black cats prowl the grasslands and prey on the sheep and cattle of the folk who dwell here. (Sometimes, they also prey on children and lone travellers, but it is well known that a man who pays proper tribute to the Necromancer is safe from animal attack, for all the wild beasts in this land pay him homage).

The eastern edge of the Vales are even more dangerous, as creatures from Mirkwood prowl here. Boars, bears and even some spiders can be seen in this land; all of them black as night, except for the spiders that glow with an unnatural luminescence like rotten moonlight.

Inhabitants

The folk of the Toft are of Northman stock, although they are mixed with Easterling blood. They are a sedentary people, living in their village and farming the land. The shadow of Dol Guldur lay over them for many generations, and they were inevitably changed by it. Those closest to Dol Guldur were wholly committed to the service of the Necromancer. They sent their sons and daughters to serve him as slaves, they freely gave tribute to him, and they worshipped him with vile and terrible ceremonies in the dead of night. Others gave tribute only grudgingly. They tried to forget Dol Guldur as they went about their lives. For them, tribute was a necessary evil, and life in the Necromancer's realm was like living beside a snow-laden

mountain. One day, the mountain must inevitably stir and the avalanche would then kill them all, but that day might be many centuries away, and until then the mountain was a safer place than the wild. The Necromancer had a legion of spies and informants among these people.

Those living outside the Toft dwell along the Great River, near the Ford of the Leofrings. They paid no tribute to Dol Guldur, and suffered many raids and other evils as punishment. They are a doughty but unfriendly people, and consider all outsiders to be potential foes. They do not welcome strangers to their territory.

Subjects Of The Necromancer

The Necromancer was not a king. He did not rule the East Nether Vales. Those who dwelt in this land never saw him. He was an invisible dread presence, an unseen force that dominated their lives. Rarely, agents of the Necromancer would emerge from the forest to demand some particular tribute, but many years would go by without any contact with Dol Guldur. Visitors to the East Nether Vales would see no signs of the Necromancer's influence on the people. The folk of the Toft did not carry the Necromancer's symbol on their shields, nor did troops from Dol Guldur patrol the borders of this land. Traders from Gondor – and there were many visitors from the south in days gone by – saw no sign of the shadow here... but the Shadow saw them. Jealous eyes watched every visitor, and their numbers and movements were reported to the Necromancer's spymasters.

Notable Characters

Vidugalum, Lord of the Toft

With the power of the Necromancer broken, old Vidugalum is the most powerful leader in the region. He commands the loyalty of dozens of men (as well as a brigade of Orcs that fled Dol Guldur) and has a wealthy and well-defended fort in the heart of the region.

Vidugalum sees himself as a practical and learned man. He has read many books and studied the histories of the kings. When the Necromancer was in power, Vidugalum bowed to Dol Guldur, but now that he is free, he intends to seize power himself and become a chieftain like Beorn. In fact, his ambition is much greater – he wants to be a king in Rhovanion, and for the Toft to grow into a trading town like Lake-town in the North. He considers questions of 'good' and 'evil' to be the mewlings of cowards and weak men who let their consciences cow them into inaction. Heroes, in Vidugalum's eyes, are those brave enough to overcome their doubts and fears. He uses his Orcs to strike at his enemies not because he is a tyrant, but because it is necessary for progress and civilisation.

Vidugalum is exceedingly old for a mortal man. Maybe he counts men of Númenor among his ancestry and so he remains vital and alert despite being more than eighty. His sons did not inherit his longevity though, so he has no clear heirs to receive his burdens. Of late, his thoughts have turned towards the fabled sorcery of the Necromancer, who was said to be able to prolong the life of his servants...

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Shadow-lore, Trading
Distinctive Features: Proud, Lordly, Wilful
Relevant skills: Courtesy ♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦
Endurance: 30

Gárhild the Fox

Gárhild was a spear-woman of the Woodmen of Rhosgobel. She lived in Mirkwood for many years, battling Spiders and Orcs and other things of darkness alongside her kin. Through her heroism, she won the trust of Radagast. He sent her as a spy into the East Nether Vales, where she has dwelt for more than ten years. He gifted her with a magical cloak that allowed her to take on the shape of a red fox to aid her mission. She watched the movements of the Necromancer's servants, and helped lead the White Council into the forest to the gates of Dol Guldur.

Now that the Necromancer is gone and the Shadow partially lifted from the forest, Gárhild has put aside her spear and magic cloak. She married a man of the Toft and now lives with her family on a small farmstead just south of the Run. None of her new kin, not even her children, know of her previous life, nor do they know about the spear and cloak concealed in the thatch of her farmhouse.

Attribute level:	4
Specialities:	Enemy-lore, Beast-lore
Distinctive Features:	Fair-Spoken, Cunning, Curious
Relevant skills:	Stealth ♦♦♦♦, Explore ♦♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦
Endurance:	16

Notable Places

The Toft

The Toft is one of the largest towns in Wilderland – which means it is much smaller than Lake-town or Dale, but has several hundred souls live within its earthen ramparts. Most of the buildings in the Toft are wooden, though a few are old stonework built by men of Gondor. Just outside the town is a large market field that is little used, for traders from the south no longer come here in great numbers. Merchants from Rhovanion and Lake-Town sometimes make the trek around the southern edge of Mirkwood to visit here, and a few ill-favoured Woodmen bring carved goods and furs to market here in summer. There is an Inn here, the *Ram's Head*. The keeper of this inn is a formidable old woman whose family are kin to the Erringmen; when angered, she shouts and hurls insults in a dozen different tongues from north and south and east.

Vidigalum's house – a fortified tower, surrounded by mounds and ditches – lies to the east of the town. His men, who bear the symbol of a red sun on their shields, patrol the roads around the Toft.

In years past, certain people in this town worshipped the Necromancer of Dol Guldur, and offered him slaves and sacrifices as gifts to curry favour. Travellers claim that children went missing in the Toft with alarming frequency, and that there are secret tunnels and cellars beneath the rough wooden houses. The defeat of the Necromancer put an end to these practises, but they may begin again should the Shadow return to Dol Guldur.

Isildur's Field

Tradition holds that this place is where Isildur, son of Elendil and heir to the kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor, fell in battle with the Orcs. For some years, it was a place of pilgrimage for warriors who came here to remember the great victory over the Shadow, and its cost. Men of Gondor built a monument here, but nothing remains of it now.

Kingstone

Once, this land was part of the Kingdom of Rhovanion, the realm of the Northmen. This kingdom fell as all the works of mortals do, but some traces remain. The Kingstone is a small pillar of rock sitting atop a low hill overlooking the Anduin, facing west. On top of the pillar is the skull of a great beast – a Dragon, some say. Legends tell how all the princes and warriors of Rhovanion swore oaths upon the stone before embarking on adventures or wars. Other stories claim that the Dragon will roar when touched by hand of the true king of the Northmen. The touch of many hands has worn the skull smooth, for it is a tradition for visitors to put their sword-hand upon it for luck.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Visit the Kingstone

Touching the Kingstone is said to bring good fortune. Companions spending a Fellowship phase in Rhosgobel can travel to this ancient site. When heroes choose this undertaking for the first time, they recover up to three points of Hope. They will recover one point on any subsequent visits in future Fellowship Phases.

- the Greatest - of the Forests

...Beorn in his deep rolling voice told tales of the wild lands on this side of the mountains, and especially of the dark and dangerous wood, that lay outstretched far to North and South a day's ride before them, barring their way to the East, the terrible forest of Mirkwood.

The sheer size of Mirkwood is almost beyond imagining for the people who live along its borders or under its boughs. From its northern border facing the steep slopes of the Grey Mountains, to its southern edge near the Brown Lands is a distance of more than four hundred miles. At its greatest width, this sea of trees is some two hundred miles wide. A traveller foolish enough to try crossing the forest lengthwise would take six months or more to make such a journey — assuming he survives, which is unlikely even for a seasoned wanderer. Mirkwood is the dark heart of the Wild.

Mirkwood is a wild wood, much more changeable than other forests like Fangorn or Lothlórien. The first Elves passed through the oldest sections of Mirkwood in the First Age of the World, long before the Sun and Moon climbed into the heavens, but other parts of Mirkwood are fresh, new growth that encroaches on what was once farmland. The forest is ever-shifting, unpredictable; it is new and old at the same time.

History of Mirkwood

Elves were the first to live here, and the first to name it *Eryn Galen*, the Greenwood. They dwelt in its dells and groves. In time, they gathered under the rule of an Elvenking, who built his hall on a great hill rising naked as an island among the sea of trees.

These Elves were a simpler folk than the Elves of Doriath, delighting in wine and song and the hunt. They had little love for outsiders even in those days: they were suspicious of the powerful Dwarf-lords of Moria, and even resented the intrusions of their kin across the Great River. Men, too, dwelt in the woods, although they lived chiefly on the edges, hewing trees for fuel and timber. The kingdoms of Men never last, though, and the wild wood endured. For long centuries, Greenwood was home only to Elves and beasts and outlaws.

The Greenwood was little troubled for many years, even as war and turmoil swirled through the wider world. Mortals lived and died in their petty kingdoms, and the Silvan Elves danced on the green grass under the stars and hunted in the deep places of the woods. It was not until the latter portion of the Second Age that the first inklings of the Shadow came to Mirkwood. The Enemy returned to his fortress in Mordor and made war on the Free Peoples. Fearing the growing strength of the Dark Lord, the Elves gradually drew back their borders. First, they made their home in the woods and vales north of the ancient Dwarf-road, and then retreated further north, to the slopes of the Dark Mountains. Evil things had come to nest there, and prince Thranduil distinguished himself as a warrior of great prowess by slaying the Great Vampire of the *Emyn Duir*.

In time, it became clear that retreat would offer no safety. The Elves of Greenwood joined the Last Alliance, sending a great army south to face the Enemy. In that war, the Elvenking was slain, and with him two thirds of those who followed him. In that time, Thranduil became King of the Silvan Elves, and he led the survivors of his army back to the shelter of the trees.

The Woodland Realm

Wearied and embittered by sorrow, the new Elvenking built a fortress and great hall north of the Dark Mountains, under the hills on the banks of the Forest River. The old palace in the south was abandoned, and the settlements in the mountains were used only lightly. The Elves looked to the east, trading with the Men of the Long Lake and Rhovanion instead of their cousins to the west. They also traded with Dwarves for gold and gemstones, for Thranduil always had a great love of beautiful things.

For many years, the Idylls of the Elves resumed. It was as though time stood still in Greenwood, paused in an endless feast. A thousand years passed.

Then, the Shadow first reached Greenwood. It began as a subtle change — the gloom beneath the trees deepened, paths became more treacherous, the animals more aggressive. Soon, Men who lived in the southern eaves of the wood spoke of strange sicknesses among their herds of kine, of bad dreams and worse omens, of fell whispers on the wind. Newborn animals had hides or fur as black as night, and the fruit that grew on trees turned dark and foul-tasting. New saplings unfurled a canopy of pitch-black leaves. Eerie mists twined around the boles of the trees, and men started to call the forest Mirkwood.

The Silvan Elves found their forest growing unfriendly to them. Their hunts could no longer range as far, and the branches of the trees clutched at each other to block out the starlight the Elves loved. Around the year 1100, the Wise learned that an evil power of great strength and malice now inhabited the ruins of the old elven fortress in the south, and sent word to the Elves warning them of the danger.

Orcs and worse things gathered in the southern part of Mirkwood. Poisonous vapours and eerie lights were reported, and sinister rumours spread about the dead walking under the shadows of the trees. Over the bald hill once inhabited by Elves now arose the fortress of Dol Guldur, and its unseen master became known as the Necromancer in the tongues of men.

The Idylls of the Elves ended. Hunts became patrols, and feasts became councils of war. Thranduil was loath to make war upon Dol Guldur — nor could he had he wanted to, for the Necromancer's strength didn't reside in armies or strongholds, but in sorcery and witchcraft, and against such fell weapons the Wood-elves had but little power. The Elves protected their borders as best they could, but soon they became a people under siege.

The Northmen & The Bight

It was in this time that the Northmen of Rhovanion grew in strength and number. Most of these were descendants of those Men who in ages past entered Beleriand and fought alongside the Elves in their wars against Morgoth. They chiefly made their homes in the eastern eaves of the forest, but being great riders and breeders of horses they ruled the wide plains between Mirkwood and the

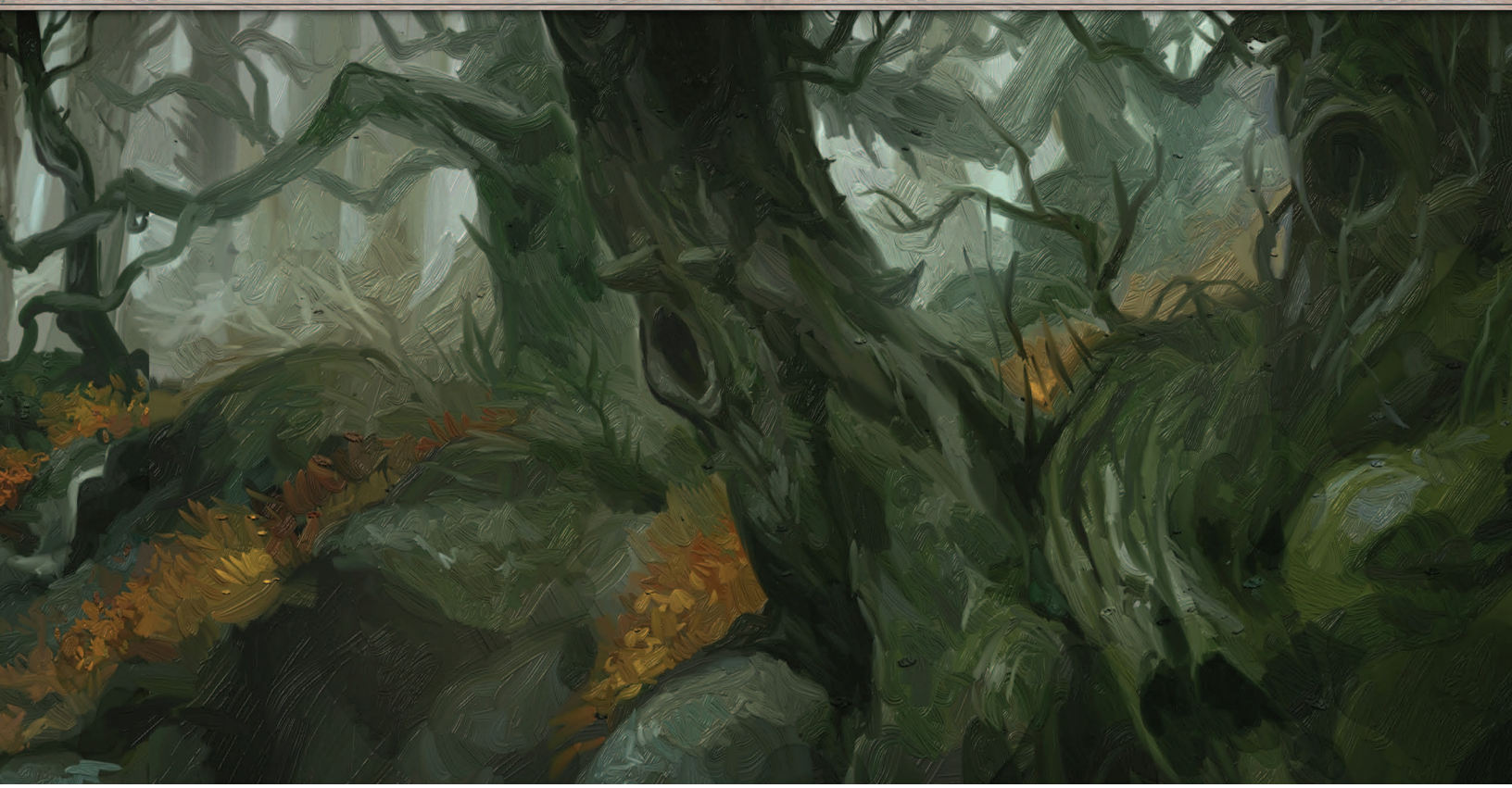
River Running. These folk were the ancestors of many who today dwell in the North, and their blood is the blood of Dale and the Woodmen, and of the Horse-lords of Rohan too. The Elves of Mirkwood did not trust these Northmen at the best of times, and tried to shy them away from the borders of their guarded realm. They preferred to trade, as they do now, with those Men who lived further north, near the Lonely Mountain.

As the numbers of the Northmen grew, so too did their hunger for wood. The great forests of the south-east, which had hitherto escaped much of the corruption of the rest of Mirkwood, were cut down so the Northmen could build more of their great longhouses. Some of the Northmen clans practised good forestry, but a growing number cut the trees down and burnt out the roots to clear the land for pasture. As the Bight grew, pressing upon lands still claimed by the Woodland Realm, there was strife between Men and Elves beneath the trees.

Among the Elves, some started to whisper that the Northmen might be in league with the Necromancer. Many Northmen saw the Elves as nothing but dangerous wood-spirits, and accused them of stealing children and bewitching travellers. Fear and suspicion grew on both sides.

In the winter of the year 1635, a terrible plague appeared in Wilderland and then spread south in the following months. The cold forced people to huddle together in the long-houses or perish, and the disease spread in those cramped conditions. Many tales told of travellers braving the snows and arriving at a longhouse of their kin, only to find a hundred corpses inside the silent hall. In some places, eight or nine out of every ten died.

The Northmen were severely diminished. Some tribes fled the plague by hiding in the deepest parts of Mirkwood, where they fell under the spells of the Necromancer or perished. Others endured as best they could, or abandoned their halls to move north, or west and then along the vales of the River Anduin. The Woodland Realm alone didn't suffer from the plague, and the Elves continued their eternal hunting and feasting inside Thranduil's sanctuary.



Dark Times

Hit severely by the disease, the southern kingdom of Gondor reduced its watch over its borders, eventually allowing strangers from the lands to the East to pass into Wilderland. In time, the number of these strangers grew, until the day when a confederation of evil Men crossed the frontiers in arms, sensing the weakness in the defences of the West. The coming of the Easterlings brought war to Wilderland and the Southlands for years on end, and heralded a time of growing darkness.

All across Middle-earth, the forces of the Enemy slowly awoke. Among a long string of dire events, the last vestiges of the north-kingdom of Arnor fell after a long struggle against the Witch-king of Angmar, and the great city of the Longbeard Dwarves under the Misty Mountains was lost when they unleashed Durin's Bane upon themselves.

Even the Elves of Lórien were troubled by this new threat, and some left the Golden Wood hoping to find sanctuary inside the Woodland Realm, but were unable to pass the shadows of Dol Guldur and so turned south.

For those who dwelt in Mirkwood, the fall of Moria and the northern kingdom of Men meant that the Old Forest Road was now in danger. The Dwarves built it many centuries before, to hasten traffic between their western and eastern settlements. The Silvan Elves tolerated its making, because of the friendship between the Dwarves of Moria and the Elves of Hollin, but only grudgingly so. The Dwarves maintained the road for many years, aided in later centuries by the Northmen. Now the Northmen were gone, and the Dwarves diminished.

For a time, the Elves tried to keep the road as their frontier against Dol Guldur, but it was too far from their realm to be effectively defended. Now, only Orcs walked the Dwarf-laid stones of the Forest Road, and parts of it were swallowed by the encroaching trees. Mirkwood became yet more perilous and trackless.

Erebor & The Watchful Peace

Before the Dwarf-road was finally abandoned, refugees from Moria crossed Mirkwood and founded a new home in the roots of the Lonely Mountain. There, they found gemstones and gold, and Thrain I became their king. Other Dwarves travelled to the Dwarf-holds in the Grey Mountains. The Woodland Realm found itself hemmed in on two sides by Dwarves, and though there was little love between the two races, the Dwarves also traded with the same folk who brought wine to the Elvenking's table. In this fashion, all three free folk — Elves, Dwarves and Men — found common cause for a time on the fringes of Northern Mirkwood.

In the year 2063 of the Third Age, Mithrandir the Grey Pilgrim, called Gandalf by some, dared to enter Dol Guldur, and walked the halls of that dread citadel where none but the servants of the Necromancer had been in a thousand years. The Necromancer withdrew, fleeing and hiding in the east, and the horrors of the Hill of Sorcery subsided for a time. There were still all manner of fell creatures — Orcs, Wood-wights, Spiders, Vampires and such monsters — in the southern portion of the forest, but the retreat of the Necromancer robbed them of their guiding hand. Divided, they could not hope to defeat the Elves. This time was known as the Watchful Peace, and was a time of great prosperity for the Woodland Realm. The borders of the Elf-Kingdom moved south again, even to the Old Forest Road. Thranduil gave thought to opening up the road once more, but chose caution instead, and a new road was cut through Northern Mirkwood. Some brave Elves even ventured south towards Dol Guldur, hoping to reclaim that place from the Necromancer's taint. None returned.

In the west of the wood, a group of Northmen settled again in the shadow of the forest. They raised a long-house there, and hung a curious lamp of elven-make from the roof. The Lamp of Balthi protected — and still protects — the settlement from the horrors of the forest. The Northmen prospered in the days of peace, and soon Woodmen-town arose in the growing clearing. The Woodmen were far from Thranduil's kingdom, so there was little trade between the two, but the Elves gave the settlers what aid they could, so that they could prove worthy allies should the Enemy return.

The Watchful Peace ended in 2460, when the Necromancer returned to Dol Guldur. Again, Orcs besieged the Woodland Realm. Other horrors attacked Woodmen-town, and only the light of the Lamp of Balthi kept them at bay. Nonetheless, many Woodmen retreated north,

just as the Elves did more than a thousand years before, and built a new sanctuary in a well-defended place called Woodland Hall. In the north, attacks by Werewolves, Vampires and other horrors forced the Elves to abandon the settlements in the Mountains of Mirkwood.

Fire and Ice

In response to the return of the Necromancer, Galadriel of Lórien called upon the Wise to gather. This first White Council united the most powerful Elf-lords of Middle-earth with the secretive Wizards. King Thranduil was invited, but refused — perhaps because he mistrusted Galadriel and her ambition, or perhaps because he feared that if Dol Guldur was provoked, the first and most dolourous stroke would fall on the Woodland Realm. The year was 2463, and the Wise agreed to set a watch on Southern Mirkwood. All three Wizards spent many years in and around the dark forest, spying on the doings of the Necromancer. In time, Radagast the Brown made his home in the woods, and became the permanent watchman over the Hill of Sorcery.

Though the Necromancer dared not move with the Wizards so close at hand, Mirkwood was troubled by other foes. Dragons crawled down from the Withered Heath to seize the gold of the northern dwarf-holds, and some worms crept into Mirkwood itself. The surviving Dwarves escaped to Erebor and the Iron Hills to nurse their wounds and plot revenge. The Elves, troubled by the passage of so many Dwarves across their realm, closed the Elf-path to travellers.

The Woodmen grew slowly in strength. The protection of the Wise gave them some confidence against the forces of Dol Guldur, but they still suffered greatly from the predations of Orcs and other creatures of darkness. Of all those who dwelt in Mirkwood, they were always the first to suffer the presence of the Shadow. Their two established settlements survived, but many other villages were swallowed by the woods. Some Woodmen set out for the Misty Mountains in search of fortune, while others clustered around Radagast, who offered them shelter. The Woodmen became his agents and aides.

In 2758, the Long Winter struck the North. Mirkwood escaped the worst, although many trees in the north of the forest were frozen by the relentless winds, and the Woodmen of Mountain Hall survived only by great fortune. Gandalf travelled to the west, to Eriador, and Saruman to the south, leaving Radagast and the Woodmen to continue the vigil over Dol Guldur.

The Dragon of Erebor

The coming of Smaug in 2770 brought the destruction of the Kingdom under the Mountain and the end of the realm of Dale, and placed a dire threat upon the very threshold of the Elvenking's halls. Had Smaug stirred himself, the

Dragon might have destroyed the Woodland Realm just as he brought desolation upon Erebor. Still, Thranduil chose not to antagonise the Dragon, and the Forest Road remained barred to Dwarves and foreign Men (that is why Thrain II, son of Thror and father of Thorin Oakenshield was captured in Mirkwood and hauled off to Dol Guldur — he tried to cross the forest via the old road, and was discovered by Orcs).

The strength of Dol Guldur grew. The Woodmen encountered ghosts in greater numbers in the southern woods, and Orcs even dared trespass on the Elf-path. They harried Elven hunting parties, and scouts were even spotted near the Elvenking's Halls. Gandalf came to Rhosgobel in 2850 to visit Radagast. That summer, he dared enter Dol Guldur for a second time, and discovered that the Necromancer was in truth Sauron, the Enemy who was believed destroyed in the War of the Last Alliance.

The White Council met again in the following year, and again invited Thranduil to join them, but their Woodmen messengers were ambushed and slain by Orcs, and so word never reached the Elvenking's Halls that the Enemy was nearby. Had Thranduil known that it was Sauron himself who menaced the Woodland Realm, he might have joined Gandalf in urging a swift strike against Dol Guldur before Sauron's power grew too great to challenge. Instead, the White Council continued to watch, and Mirkwood continued to be a battleground between the Free Peoples and the servants of the Shadow.

It was not a war, but every year brought with it new tales of woe. The Elves of the Woodland Realm redoubled their patrols, while the Woodmen grew ever more dour and fell-handed in their ways. More and more Orcs slipped past the Woodmen and scoured the Gladden Fields for the lost Ruling Ring.

Recent Years

The year of 2941 will be remembered as long as folk dwell in Mirkwood. The White Council met again, and gathered their powers to drive Sauron out of Dol Guldur. The Necromancer fled before the wrath of the Wizards, and his fortress was abandoned. A short few weeks later, the Dragon died at the hand of Bard the Bowman, and the kingdoms of Erebor and Dale were both renewed.

A bright new spring has come to the north, and the promise of hope and light can be felt even beneath the mossy boughs of dark Mirkwood. The Elves are seen more and more, neighbours have become friends, and many good-hearted folk gather under the protection of Beorn or Bard. The Woodmen look to the south, and the new opportunities granted to them by the fall of Dol Guldur.

These are the last good years.

Regions of Mirkwood

> **It was not long before they grew to hate the forest as heartily as they had hated the tunnels of the goblins, and it seemed to offer even less hope of any ending.**

To outsiders, Mirkwood is simply the forest. It seems to be an unending wilderness of dark trees with no paths or tracks to follow. If you go beyond the forest eaves and lose sight of the warm light of the sun, you may be swallowed up and lost forever in the gloom. Those who dwell in the forest, though, divide Mirkwood into several distinct regions.

Elements of Darkness

From the stunted pines of the far north to the willows and beeches of the south, Mirkwood encompasses many different landscapes, but they are all uniformly ghastly and unwelcoming. The Loremaster may find it useful to employ the following traits when describing locations inside Mirkwood (the descriptors suit almost every region of the dark forest, to a greater or lesser extent).

No Light

There are few gaps in the forest canopy overhead. Branches cling together, and the dark leaves and hanging shrouds of lichen block out the sun. Even at the height of the day, there is little light in the forest. The trees turn the bright sunlight into a darkened green glimmer.

Your eyes play tricks on you during the day, turning knots in the bark into leering faces or fallen logs into monsters. At night, the forest is as dark as the deepest cave at the roots of the mountains.

No Fresh Air

On the forest floor, a traveller is surrounded on all sides by thick foliage, by clinging spider-webs, by gnarled branches and black trunks. Any wind that blows into Mirkwood cannot penetrate the depths of the wood. The leaves far overhead might rustle with strange, eerie voices, but no fresh air reaches the upturned faces of the travellers below. Inhale deeply, and your lungs fill with the stench of rotting leaves, with choking spores and dust, with unwholesome warm air. Mirkwood does provide some shelter from extremes of weather — winters in the forest are warmer, summers cooler — but there is so little air in the woods that a traveller might prefer to freeze in the open air than be smothered by leaves.

No Water

The trees' deep roots drink hungrily. There are few streams or rivers in Mirkwood; parts of Southern Mirkwood are especially parched. Worse, most of these streams are foul and black, and have strange effects on those unwise enough to drink from them. There are safe streams or springs where a traveller can refill a water-skin and quench his thirst, but only those who know Mirkwood well can find them. When it rains, the water cascades down through the leaves, gathering a bitter taste and a brown-green hue as it falls.

No Food

There is food in Mirkwood — if you know where to look. There are fruiting trees, nuts, roots, plants and mushrooms to gather; fish and rabbits and squirrels and deer to hunt. Finding food is difficult even for an experienced adventurer. The Woodmen know better than to eat any black-furred animals within the forest, as their meat tastes foul, and they have learned which plants may be safely eaten and which are poisonous. The difficulty of finding food in the forest varies as the Shadow grows. During the Watchful Peace, when the Necromancer withdrew from

the woods, it is said that huge herds of deer roamed the territory between the Old Forest Road and the Elf-path, and many hope that this bounty will return now that Dol Guldur is empty again. When the Shadow grows, even plants that were previously edible may become poisonous or extinct.

No Paths

There are only two major paths that cross all of Mirkwood, and the only paths in the rest of the forest are short, local tracks near the Woodmen settlements or the Elvenking's Halls, or the Orc-paths around Dol Guldur. A traveller who leaves the path has few or no chances of finding another. You could roam the middle part of the forest for months and find no trace of another living soul.

No Life

Mirkwood is crowded with all manner of creatures. A traveller will certainly *hear* these creatures — the howling of wolves, the scratching of squirrels in the treetops, the mocking croaks of ravens and the squeak of bats — but he may not see any sign of life for days. The animals blend into the forest gloom, becoming almost part of the darkness. Mirkwood is a primordial forest, unfriendly to anything that walks on two legs.

No Hope

Mirkwood is a green-black sea of trees, and a man may drown in the forest's endless undergrowth as surely as he is dragged under by the waves. If you leave the path in Mirkwood, and lack the woodcraft to find your way home, you will perish there. The forest does not forgive fools.

Travelling in Mirkwood

Travelling across Mirkwood is of either *severe* or *daunting* travel difficulty, with the exception of its Western Eaves where the Woodmen dwell and the difficulty is only *hard*. Those with the Trait *Mirkwood-lore* may invoke it to automatically succeed at the Lore roll needed to plan a journey. Furthermore, while general travel in the forest may be difficult, those who dwell in the forest may know local routes and secret paths that are easier to follow — an Elf returning home from a short hunting trip does not need to make a TRAVEL roll! The Loremaster should only call for TRAVEL tests on important and perilous journeys.

The Evil of the Forest

The endless darkness, the myriad trees, and the overwhelming gloom of the woods wears away at a traveller's good spirits. The evil of the forest saps the soul. In game terms, this is represented by the growing Corruption forced on travellers as they make their way through Mirkwood. If a character suffers a Bout of

Madness (see the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 58) while in Mirkwood, the following effects are particularly appropriate.

Running in Panic

The character is seized by confusion or terror, and runs into the woods. If several characters succumb simultaneously, the whole Company can be scattered and lost. A single character who runs in panic might blunder into danger.

Quarrelling

The character nurses real or imagined grudges against the rest of the company. This is not as violent a reaction as rage, but it does last longer. The character becomes snappish and withdrawn, and cannot regain Hope from a fellowship focus until the Company rests in a sanctuary.

Hallucinations

The character believes he can hear voices in the treetops, or sees faces leering out of the leaves. The Loremaster should describe the character's surroundings in a way that plays into the character's fears — if the character is hunting the Werewolf of Mirkwood, then the character might hallucinate howls on the night wind, the smell of rotting meat and stinking breath, and think that every creaking branch and rustling leaf heralds the beast's approach.

Sloth

The character decides that the unreality of dreams is preferable to the weariness or horror of the waking world. Why traipse through the forest until you drop dead of starvation, when you can just close your eyes and dream of a feast and slip peacefully into the sleep of death? A character in a bout of sloth refuses to move or to do anything, and must be carried or forced to move.

Mad With Hunger and Thirst

The character is wracked by thirst and hunger pangs. He will do anything to get food and drink. If the company are rationing supplies, the character schemes to take more than his fair share. If the character has a chance to get extra food (say, by chasing a fleet-footed stag into the woods, or stealing food from another traveller), he will take it.

Northern Mirkwood

Northern Mirkwood begins in the foothills of the Grey Mountains. Twisted pines grow from the flanks of stony hills. The first trees are small, stunted and thinly spread, but from the heights a traveller can view the great forest stretching out as far as the eye can see. The Forest River plunges down from the mountains in a cascade of roaring waterfalls before vanishing into the woods. Its course is flanked by birch, alder and poplar trees.

The centre of Northern Mirkwood is a long low spur of hills, falling away on the west to the Vales of Anduin and dropping sharply in the east to the Forest River valley. The hills are chalky and perilous, with many unexpected ravines and cliffs. Caves in the upper hills are home to bears and wolves. The hills are covered by firs and pines, and none of the hills are clear of trees.

To the west, the hills roll gently down to the forest eaves. The western portion of Northern Mirkwood is furthest from the baleful influence of Dol Guldur, and a traveller can taste the difference in the air. The trees are not so closely packed here, nor the gloom so deep. This is a lonely land, where neither Man nor Elf nor Orc ever goes. The hunting is good here, although the presence of great black bears and wolves may turn the hunter into the quarry. The deer herds of the deep forest are most often encountered in this land.

The north-western eaves show signs of ancient forestry and wood-cutting. These trees were used to fortify the villages of the Éothéod, a nation of Northmen founded centuries ago by refugees escaping the ravages of the war to the east (see *The Horse-people*, page 8). They lived mainly where the rivers Langwell and Greylin meet, to flow into what becomes the Great River Anduin, but built also along the western edge of Northern Mirkwood. A folk of great riders, they left the area more than four hundred years ago, when they were led south by a legendary leader, Eorl the Young.

North-east of the central rise, the land falls steeply into the lush Forest River valley. The soft stone gives way to bogland and marshy soil, and the Forest River meanders through fens. In the summer and autumn, thick fogs rise

from the marsh making the river almost impassable. Winter brings a cruel frost to the exposed valley, and spring heralds flash floods and wild water. The upper reaches of the Forest River valley are extremely treacherous. Sucking mud pools big enough to swallow a horse and nests of vipers under crumbling cliffs await unwary travellers.

The southern portion of the region, including the tongue south of the Forest River that reaches all the way to the Long Marshes, is dark and foreboding. This is a land of oak and hornbeam, of pine and fir, of thorn and yew. The forest thickens the further south and east you go, becoming a tangled and impassable maze in places.

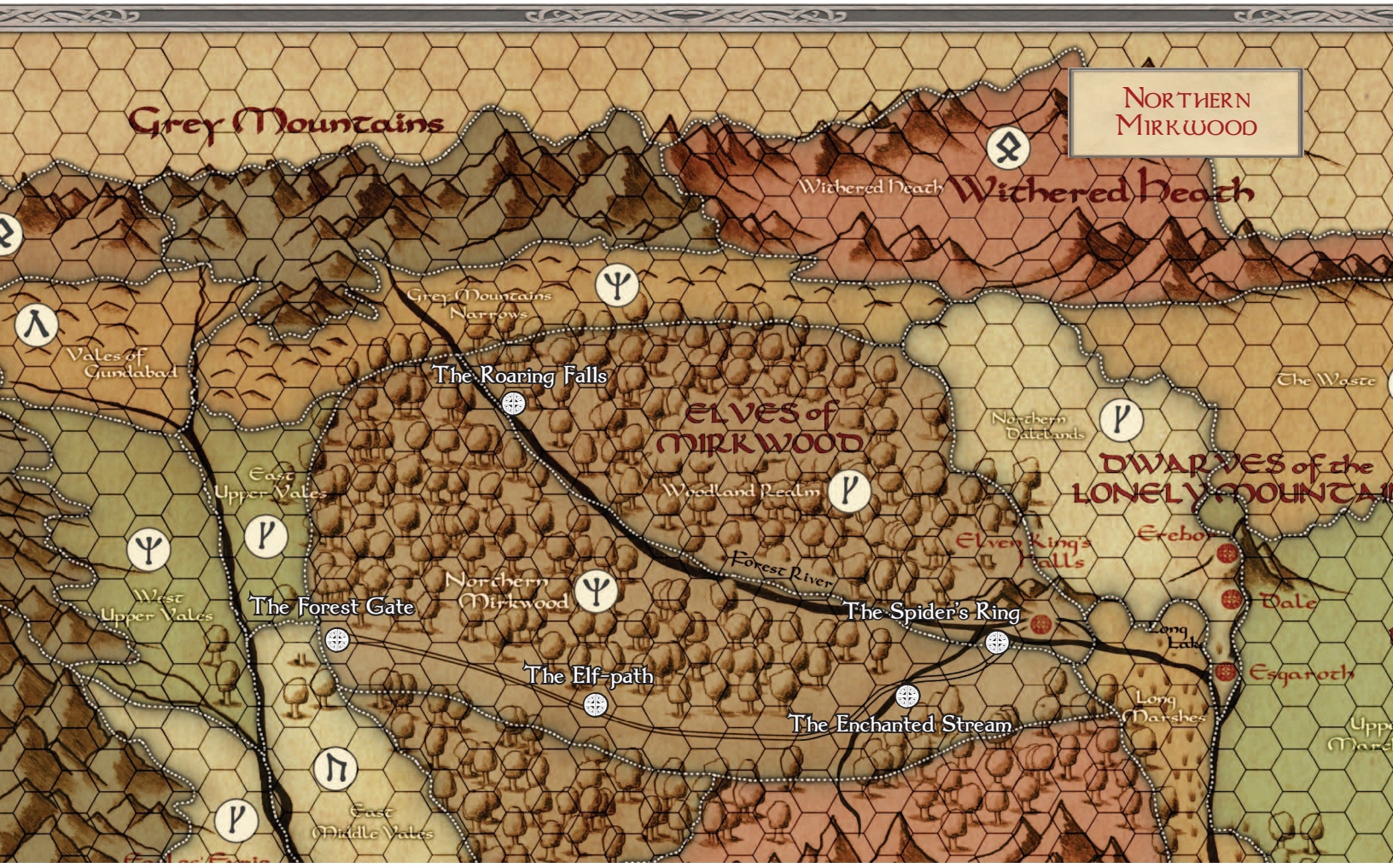
This is the true Mirkwood, where the ground is smothered in the leaf-mould of centuries and the sky is shrouded by a green-black canopy. Small thorn-bushes and choking poison ivy slither around and between the tree-trunks, looking for the slightest sliver of sunlight from above.

Wildlife

In the north-west, the wildlife is that common to any wood: wolves, bears, deer, rabbits, foxes and the like. The hilly region in the middle is home to smaller creatures mostly, although the bears and wolves may winter here in the caves. The Forest River valley is home to all these creatures, especially the great black bears, but also snakes and a panoply of insects and crawling things. The south-eastern part of the region has fewer bears and wolves, but many more Spiders.

Inhabitants

Most of this region is uninhabited. The forest long since swallowed the ruins of the old halls and villages that once stood here, but the remains can be found if you know where to look. If any of their descendants still live, they may have taken refuge in the deepest parts of Northern Mirkwood. Certainly, elven scouts have found signs of habitation in the hills; perhaps the wild descendants



of the vanished Northmen, or refugees from Southern Mirkwood, or madmen or hermits who fear the growing Shadow in the forest.

A few foresters living along the western fringe. These are a cruel, hardy folk who do not share the same customs as the Woodmen of Wilderland. They are said to be descended from outlaws, and dislike trespassers. From time to time they even dare to attack travellers entering the Elf-path. The Beornings have a blood feud with these foresters, and claim that they trade with Orcs in the hills.

Notable Characters

The Forest Dragon

This nameless dragon crawled out of the North three hundred years ago, and dwells in a cave in the heart of Northern Mirkwood. Some say her hoard was stolen from the Dwarves, others claim she plundered a Northman town that is now lost under the leaves. The dragon is a long-worm, of the line of Scatha.

The entrance to her lair is hidden behind a curtain of moss, and is hard to find unless she recently hunted, in which case the scars left by the dragon's passage are plain to see. Thus far, no hero has dared go out to slay the Forest Dragon, and she has not troubled the Woodland Realm directly. Thranduil hopes that she has fallen into the long slumber of her kind, and that she will not awake again until the ending of the world.

The Forest Dragon awakens in *The Darkening of Mirkwood*.

Notable Places

The Forest Gate

The path of the Silvan Elves through Mirkwood begins here, at this great arch of trees. The Wise can sense the power of the Elvenking in this place, for it is his magic that keeps the path clear of cobwebs and other dangers. After the Battle of Five Armies, the Elves placed a watch on the gate. A traveller may not see the elven sentries, hidden aloft in the trees, but they are there, vigilant and armed with deadly arrows.

The Forest Gate is a good place to meet travellers and merchants as they prepare for the journey into the woods. It is also where the Elves of Mirkwood treat with the Beorning-folk of the Vales; the two folk have little good to say about each other, but they are both enemies of the one Enemy.

The Roaring Falls

The Forest River passes through seven waterfalls before it reaches the Long Lake. The Roaring Falls are found on the edge of the Woodland Realm, where the river pours over

a steep cliff and plunges into a ravine. The sound of the crashing water sounds like the roaring of a tremendous beast.

In ages past, the Elves built a tower atop the cliff, but this tower is empty and partially ruined now. Still, the Roaring Falls are often used as a waystation by Elven border guards and scouts on their way west or north. The Lady Irimë, a lady of Thranduil's court, once prophesied that a great hero and a terrible monster would one day meet their deaths at the Roaring Falls, tumbling into the churning white spray still locked in mortal combat.

The Enchanted Stream

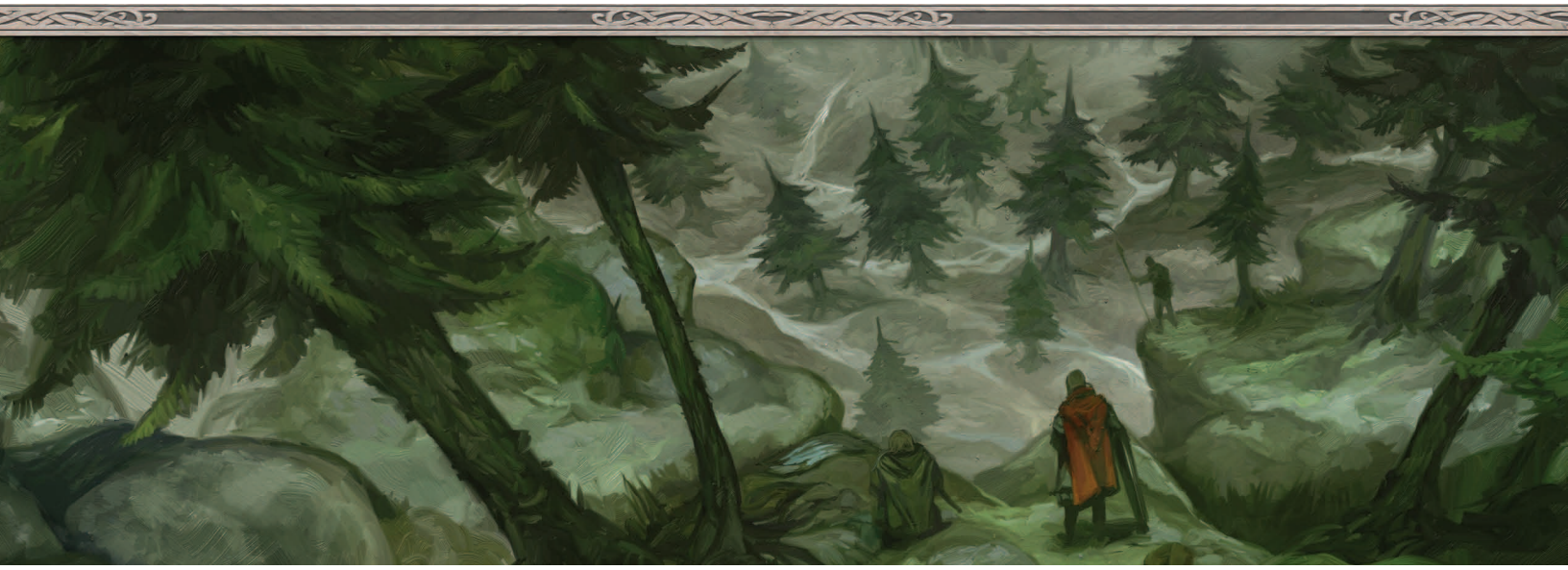
Today, the Enchanted Stream flows out of the Mountains of Mirkwood and crosses the Elf-path through the forest, but that was not always its course. Once, long ago, it flowed south instead and joined with the Dusky River in the Western Eaves. Further, it is said that Goblins fleeing the Battle of Five Armies retreated into Mirkwood, only to find the Enchanted Stream flowing along the border of the Northern Dale-lands. The Stream springs from the spells of the Elvenking, and is (mostly) under his control. Should he choose, he can make the Stream flow to any place in his domain, or command it to shrink to a trickle or swell to a raging torrent. Many Orcs who dared cross into the Woodland Realm returned witless and blind and dripping wet.

The Enchanted Stream is wilful and petulant, and does not always obey its master's commands. It mostly flows in its proper channels, but sometimes it goes wandering, leaving behind a dry river bed. The Stream cannot leave the borders of Mirkwood, nor can it cross the Old Forest Road.

Perils of the Stream

Anyone who falls into or drinks from the Enchanted Stream falls under the water's enchantment. The hero must immediately make a Wisdom test at TN 14 .

- If the test is failed, the companion falls into an enchanted slumber and cannot be awoken by any means, except by the Elvenking (or some equally powerful magic, like a spell from a Wizard).
- If the character succeeds normally, he falls asleep for several (1-6) days and forgets everything that happened since the last Fellowship phase, losing any Advancement points gained thus far. Afterwards, he is considered weary until he rests.
- If the character succeeds with a great success, he forgets only the last few days, and sleeps for a single day. Afterwards, he is considered weary until he rests.
- A character who succeeds with an extraordinary success throws off the enchantment and is mostly unaffected, but is weary until he rests.



The Elf-path

There are two roads in Mirkwood — the Old Forest Road in the south, and the Elf-path in the north. The Elf-path winds its way amid the trunks of the trees from west to east. It is not an easy path to follow. At times, it is so narrow that only a single traveller can walk along it. It curves and twists and bucks like a wild horse. In places, the path climbs up steep hills, where the Elves cut steps into the earth. The tree branches overhead form a solid roof of wood and leaves, admitting no sunlight or fresh breeze; walking the Elf-path starts out like walking a tunnel, and soon comes to resemble being buried alive.

The magic of the Elvenking ensures that the path is never blocked. Spiders might weave their webs so thickly along the edges of the path that a single mis-step would send a traveller to a sticky end; trees might grumble and drop branches, wolves might run alongside the path for days, their hungry eyes gleaming in the darkness — but none dare block the path. If you don't stray from the Elvenking's Path, you will eventually find yourself at his door.

There are no inns or homely houses on the path, no shelter save the overhanging branches. The Elves hide supply caches along the path, but these are so cunningly concealed that an outsider will never find them. The Beornings warn those who travel through Mirkwood to take plenty of supplies with them, for there is no safe food or water within the forest.

The Spider's Ring

The Spider's Ring was once a feast-hall of the Elves, but now only Spiders dwell here, and it is their closest colony to the Woodland Realm. Bilbo and the Dwarves had the misfortune to blunder into this trap when they got lost in Mirkwood. The whole clearing is covered in thick black webs, darker and denser than any on the Elf-path.

The Spiders strung long ropes between the tallest trees, creating a network of rope bridges high in the air over the clearing. When they catch a victim, they drag him back here and string him up to rot for a few weeks before they suck him dry. The corpses of deer and sheep and badgers hang from the heights, along with a few unlucky Orcs or Elves.

The mucky floor of the Spider's Ring may contain some treasures dropped from previous victims — Spiders have no use for gold or weapons, and consider them to be nasty hard things that might break a fang if bitten too hard. The floor is also alive with uncounted millions of young spiders, no bigger than a thumbnail, who feed on the drippings of the prey.

The Woodland Realm

The Elvenking's realm claims all the forest from the north-eastern edge of Mirkwood to the Forest River. The northern part of his realm is a land of silent wooded hills and quiet valleys, where no man goes. Even the Elves rarely travel to this empty land save when they seek solitude or to listen to the night-speech of the trees. Traditionally, this land is the hunting forest of the Elvenking, but the horns of the wild hunt have not echoed here in hundreds of years. The King hunts closer to his hall — but still, any man who shoots a deer in these lands is considered a poacher by the Elves.

Travel south, and the land dips into a vast bowl called the *Bower*. Here, in twilight clearings under the stars, the Wood-elves dance and sing songs of the Elder Days. The trees of this land are oak and beech and rowan, all beloved of the Elves. The Bower is well guarded by the Elves, and no trespasser has passed its borders in an age. Few mortals have ever visited the glades of the Bower, or feasted by the light of cunningly wrought elven-lamps.

The eastern border along the Dalelands is a land of elms and whitebeam trees, though there are also orchards and stands of yew-wood for bows. During the Watchful Peace, the Elves fortified this land.

The Wood-elves rarely raise towers or walls, so their preparations are in the tree-tops and in caves under the earth — hidden in the thick black canopy of the forest are wooden platforms suspended between the trees, stacked with arrows, supply caches of elven-armour and weapons, and cleverly concealed sentry posts. Here, too, are eyries and nests, for the Wood-elves have a great friendship with birds, and use them as messengers and spies.

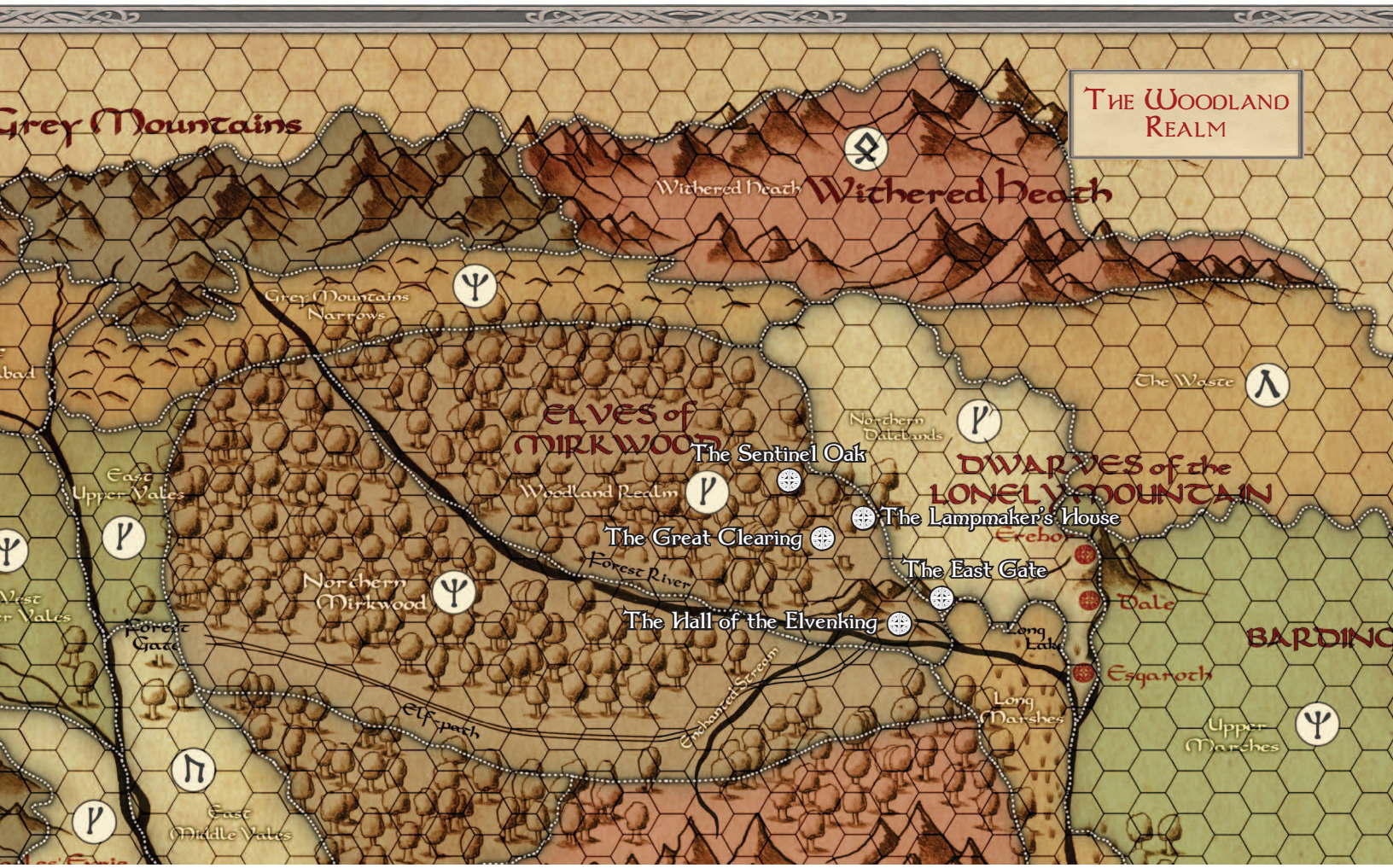
South of the Bower, the Forest River runs black and swift through the woods. Fed by waters from the Mountains of Mirkwood and the Forest Hills, the Forest River swells as it runs through the Woodland Realm. Its banks are lined with osiers and willows, and long branches trail in the water. The Wood-elves can navigate these hazardous waters in their small boats, dodging hidden rocks and choking weeds to row upriver. Of late, the Spiders have managed to cross the river, and now spin webs across the flow to catch unwary Elves.

In the south-east of the Woodland Realm, the land rises again into dark hills. It is here that the Elvenking's Hall is found, in a series of caves cut by the river in days of yore. The main branch of the Forest River winds through a steep-sided valley, but there are other smaller channels and tributaries in the hills that make travel difficult. The eastern edge of the hills descends into the Long Marshes. The trees of Mirkwood continue for many miles — mostly alders in this wet ground — but the edge of the Woodland Realm is marked by a great lonely oak on the last hill.

Wildlife

The Woodland Realm is home to a similar range of animals as the rest of Northern Mirkwood. Wolves and bears dwell in the wild north, along with deer and squirrels. Deer are especially numerous in the Bower, which is also home to a great many birds. Beavers and water-fowl live along the Forest River. Goats, sheep, small ponies and foxes are common on the eastern borders, especially in the hills. At night, swarms of bats from the Mountains of Mirkwood trouble the southern part of the Woodland Realm.

The land is no longer free of Spiders. For many years, they dared not cross the Elf-path, but the Spiders established a large colony somewhere in the middle of Northern Mirkwood, and are now encroaching on the Realm. They crossed the River, although they are deathly afraid of



water, by weaving shimmering spiderweb bridges and throwing them across the river narrows. The Elves work to keep the horrid creatures from overrunning the Bower; there are great pits where they burn the bodies of slain Spiders.

Inhabitants

Virtually all the Elves of Mirkwood make their home here in the Woodland Realm. The rustic Wood-elves live in platforms in the branches, or else in small houses or even tents on the forest floor. Most live within three days' travel of the Elvenking's Halls, but they are a wandering people, passing at times into the north and west of the realm as whimsy takes them.

The Wood-elves are, in the Third Age of Middle-earth, the most numerous branch of elven-kind. Unlike the Elves dwelling in Rivendell or even their cousins of Lórien, the Wood-elves delight in simpler things, preferring merry-making and song to the study of lore. Before the Shadow came to Mirkwood, the Wood-elves lived in sylvan bliss, feasting and hunting and singing and dancing as their hearts willed. Now, they must weigh feasting against vigilance, and hunt Orcs instead of stags. The Elvenking cannot afford to indulge his subjects' pleasures, and must draw them away from their twilight merry-making to prepare for war.

While most of Thranduil's subjects heed their king's commands, some Elves are loath to leave their play. These Elves are unwilling to fight, preferring to melt away into the woods and hide. They delight in trickery, in bewitching or befuddling mortals, and in petty-magics and illusions. Indeed, they even leave the wood to play tricks on the cottars and farmers of the Dalelands.

Notable Characters

King Thranduil

Thranduil rules over a people under threat. His subjects may dance and feast in the forest, forgetting the Shadow that hangs over them, but Thranduil cannot allow himself to forget. He knows first-hand the suffering and sorrow inflicted by the Enemy, as he went to war with Gil-galad and his father, and saw many Elves and Men die in battle. Together with the secret havens of Rivendell and Lórien and the western realm of Lindon, his is one of the last Elvish kingdoms left in Middle-earth. Thranduil will not let it fall.

He is a stern, imperious king, unforgiving to his enemies, but kind and wise and fatherly to his people. He prefers to rely on the strength of the Elves of Mirkwood rather than ally with outsiders. If he has a weakness, it is his pride — he will brook no insolence, nor will he bear any slight to

his realm. Thranduil knows that the Woodland Realm is but a fleeting shadow compared with the Elf-kingdoms of old, but he will not tolerate any suggestion that it is not as great or as beautiful as they were. He delights in gold and gemstones and beautiful things to decorate his hall and his woods.

He is a brave general, and strong. The Woodland Realm would be terribly weakened should he be wounded or slain, for it is the Elvenking's magic that keeps its paths clear and the Shadow at bay.

Attribute level: 9
Specialities: Elven-Lore, Old Lore
Distinctive Features: Lordly, Proud
Relevant skills: Lore ♦♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦♦♦♦, Bow ♦♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 60

Thranduil's Ring

At times, Thranduil wears a ring of silver set with a glittering white gemstone upon his finger. Any who look upon this ring can tell that it is magical. The ring was forged by Celebrimbor of Eollin during the Second Age of the World.

Sauron knows that Thranduil has a magic ring, perhaps even a Ring of Power. The Enemy knows that three rings were forged for the Elven-Kings. One ring he guesses Gil-galad bore to war, and that ring is most likely hidden with Elrond Half-elven. Another ring might be in Lórien, with Galadriel and Celeborn. The third ring, though... where is that hiding? His spies tell him that Cirdan the Shipwright has no ring of power. Could the third ring be close at hand in Mirkwood?

In truth, Thranduil's rings is but one of the lesser rings. Many such magic rings were made in Eregion before the forging of the rings of power. Compared to the Three or the One, it is a petty thing – but it occupies Sauron's mind, and makes him wary of the Woodland Realm, and that is a magic beyond price.

The Crown of the Elvenking

Although Thranduil delights in silver and white gems above all other treasures, and despite the fact that his treasury overflows with beautiful things, the Elvenking wears a simple crown of leaves. This crown symbolises his bond with the Wood-elves. A new crown is made at the turning of each season. In spring, he wears oak-leaves and laurels, in summer flowers. In the autumn, he wears berries and red leaves, and in winter a crown of frosted thorns and ivy.

Encountering Thranduil

Thranduil can be met at his halls in Mirkwood, or feasting or hunting in the woods. Greet him with courtesy and give him all the respect due a king, and he will treat a visitor fairly. If a visitor breaks his law (even unwittingly), scorns

his court or challenges his authority, then, well, Thranduil has many cells in his dungeons. The Woodland Realm is his kingdom and he is the master there. Any visitor, even an Elf-lord of the West, must acknowledge Thranduil's lordly status within Mirkwood.

Thranduil listens to petitions at court or at feasts, but such requests must go through proper channels. One does not just walk up and bend the Elvenking's ear about some petty request – you have to make an appointment, and offer a suitable gift, and follow all the correct forms of address. He has a grudge against Dwarves, and considers most Men to be greedy, grasping trespassers. He respects only those who have proven themselves brave enemies of the Shadow.

Thranduil's primary goal is always to protect his people and his kingdom. He fears being lured into a trap by agents of the Shadow, so he is cautious and slow to act at times, but when his path is clear he decides with great swiftness.

Thranduil as a Patron

Thranduil is an excellent patron for characters who want to fight the Darkening of Mirkwood. The king favours those who are brave and clever; he wants trustworthy agents who can fight the Enemy's plans without drawing evil down on the Woodland Realm. Thranduil has little interest in affairs outside his wood, unless convinced that they might endanger his realm in the future. He has guided and protected the Elves of Mirkwood for many hundreds of years, and he has seen other kingdoms fall – he will do anything to ensure that the Woodland Realm does not meet the same fate.Thranduil will only be a patron for companies that include at least one Elf, and is unlikely to favour any company that counts a Dwarf among its number.

The Fading of the Elves of Mirkwood

Hiding in the deep darkness of Mirkwood, away from the bustling world of mortal Men, the Silvan Elves are every year more in danger of dwindling into "a rustic folk of dell and cave". Far from the protection of a Ring of Power, the tides of time take their toll on the long-lived Elves, not in the way old age takes over and eventually ends the lives of mortals, but by slowly consuming their physical bodies. Every Elf who refuses to sail over the Sea to linger upon the shores of Middle-earth is doomed to *fade*.

Thranduil fears that the rebellious ways of the Wayward Elves is hastening their diminishment. Instead of opposing the forest's 'call of the wild', the Wayward Elves embrace it, relishing in the changes they are bringing upon themselves with their unbridled ways.

New Cultural Virtue: The Call of Mirkwood (Elves of Mirkwood only)

They differed from the High Elves of the West, and were more dangerous and less wise.

You think your fate and that of your race should be that of enjoying life to the fullest, as long as Mirkwood and the world endure. You accept the price of this choice: you will dwindle and fade until you become a living memory, a fairy who lingers yet in the shadows of the trees. For the moment though, your fading just makes it harder for others to heed your footsteps, or to see you when you choose not to be seen.

You may spend a point of Hope to automatically succeed at any STEALTH roll. Additionally, when you make a roll using a Movement or a Survival skill, you ignore the effects of being Weary.

Unfortunately, your fading does not pass unnoticed; other Elves recognise your refusal to depart into the West with a simple look, and treat you as a wild and wilful creature, not deserving trust: your Valour and Wisdom are considered to be equal to 1 for the purposes of determining the Tolerance of an encounter.

The Wayward Elves

The Wayward Elves are a small but growing faction within the Woodland Realm. They devote themselves to the pursuit of pleasure and amusement, and their japes are often cruel. They play tricks on travellers in the forest, and sometimes even leave the woods to harass the Bardings or the folk of Lake-town. So far, their jokes have all been harmless fun, but the wilder the Elves grow, the less care they have for the safety of mortals.

The Wayward Elves chafe under Thranduil's rule, believing that he is too solicitous of Men and too worried about the shadow of things to come.

Halbrech the Wineseller

Merry Halbrech hails from distant Dorwinion, though he lives in Lake-town. He is one of the merchants who provide wine for the Elvenking's table. Halbrech's father Harod was a particular favourite of Thranduil, for he had an excellent palate and could find the very best wine in each season. The House of Harod has long been under the patronage of the Woodland Realm.

Halbrech's ruddy round face and feigned happiness hide a terrible secret. Many years ago, a servant of the Enemy seduced him into telling her the secrets of the Woodland Realm. Halbrech knew a great deal about the defences of Thranduil's Halls, and could guess at how many warriors served the Elvenking.

When the White Council drove the Necromancer from Dol Guldur, Halbrech dared to hope that his ordeal was over, and that the Enemy's spies would never contact him again. He made arrangements to destroy any evidence of his treason. Halbrech plays a key role in *The Darkening of Mirkwood*, so Loremasters wishing to make use of that adventure should aid Halbrech in hiding his treachery until the hour is right.

Attribute level: 4
Specialities: Elven-Lore, Trading
Distinctive Features: Merry, Secretive
Relevant skills: Courtesy ♦♦♦♦, Stealth ♦♦♦
Endurance: 16

Notable Places

The Halls of the Elvenking

The main portion of the Elf-path ends where it crosses the Forest River. A long avenue of trees marks the approach to the river, and an elegant Dwarf-wrought bridge of stone arches over the fast-flowing waters. Across the bridge is a grassy slope lined with beeches, and the entrance to the underground halls. For more on the Elvenking's Halls, see page 80.

The Elf-path continues across the bridge, climbing up to the west of the bridge and ascending by a steep staircase to the top of the hill. From there, the path winds through narrow valleys overhung with oak, crabapple and boxwood until it passes the Sentinel Oak. To the right of the bridge, the Forest River crashes down another short waterfall to enter a small canyon. A smaller stream flows out of a cave at the far end of the canyon to join the river; this stream is used by the Elves to bring their boats, rafts and barrels onto the water.

Opening the Halls of the Elvenking as a Sanctuary

Companions who have entered the palace of King Thranduil for the first time during an Adventuring phase may spend a Fellowship phase as guests of the Silvan Elves. If they wish to return, all companions must choose the *Open New Sanctuary* undertaking (see p. 173 of the *Loremaster's Guide*). But not everyone is welcome here: all Dwarves and any heroes with three or more Shadow points will be questioned by the Elvenking's guards every time they want to enter the halls and must pass a RIDDLE test: a failure results in the companion being turned away at the doors. (*True-hearted* heroes may be granted an automatic success).

The Sentinel Oak

This ancient oak was planted by Thranduil's father to mark the eastern border of his domain. A matching tree once stood near the Naked Hill in the far south of the forest. The Sentinel Oak has seen many ages of the world

come and go, and is considered wise among its kind. It is one of the livelier trees in Mirkwood, eager to speak to those who know the tongue of trees.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Visit the Sentinel Oak

The Sentinel Oak is prince of the eastern half of Mirkwood. In summer and autumn, it wears a crown of golden leaves; in winter and spring, a mantle of frost that glitters like diamonds cloaks the tree. The other trees of the forest obey and honour the Sentinel Oak, even most of those under the Shadow.

A character spending a fellowship phase as a guest of the Elvenking may visit the Sentinel Oak and receive its blessing: for the length of the following Adventuring phase all TRAVEL rolls made in the Woodland Realm, Mountains of Mirkwood and Heart of Mirkwood are reduced by one level (TN -2).

The East Gate

The Elf-path ends much as it began, with an arch of crossed oak-trees. It leads out to the north end of the Long Marshes. From there, a traveller can simply keep the bogs at his right hand and keep walking until he spies the swans rising from the Long Lake.

In recent years, as the various Free Peoples of the North draw closer together, more and more merchants and pedlars pass through the East Gate, and such trade attracts brigands and thieves.

The Great Clearing

In the heart of the Bower, there lies a great clearing. This open greensward is more than a mile across; a cold pure spring wells up near one edge and a stream flows through the clearing. White beeches stand like lamp-posts in a ring around the centre. This is the feast-hall and council chamber of the Elves of Mirkwood, where they can all gather beneath the stars. Many Elves make their home in the woods near the clearing.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Feast in the Great Clearing

When companions are spending a fellowship phase at Thranduil's Halls, they may go and feast in the Great Clearing and gain the benefits of the *Merry* distinctive feature for the duration of the following Adventuring phase. If the character already is *Merry*, then he may gain two benefits from a single Trait invocation (for example, he could automatically succeed at a roll and gain an Advancement point).

The Lampmaker's House

The Elf Ormal dwells in this white-walled house three days' north of Thranduil's Halls. He knows all the secrets of lamp-making, and remembers lore from the Elder Days that has been forgotten or lost by other Elves. No Wood-elves are as devoted to the art of crafting as he is. In ages past, he studied with Celebrimbor of Hollin, who forged the Rings of Power. Ormal's lamps light the halls of the Elvenking.

Ormal has the talent to re-forge broken items of power. Should the adventurers be lucky enough to recover some weapon or other relic of the Elder Days, Ormal may be able to help them repair it and master its powers.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Study with the Lampmaker (Elves only)

When companions are spending a fellowship phase at Thranduil's Halls, they may go and study under Ormal's tutelage. An Elf who knows all the spells associated with the *Wood-Elf Magic* Virtue may choose this undertaking and spend an Experience point to learn one of the secrets known by Ormal.

- Blazing Elf-lights: You may now cause your *Elf-lights* to blaze with a magical flare of great intensity, almost as bright as the sun.

This blaze quickly dies out, but while it burns, it is as though night turns to day: creatures who are harmed by the sun suffer accordingly (monsters with *Hate Sunlight* suffer the loss of 1 point of Hate, and those with *Denizen of the Dark* lose the associated advantage for 3 rounds).

- Lamp of the Far Traveller: You learn the art of making crystal lamps that hold your magical light. You may start an Adventuring phase lighting such a lamp with your magic at no cost. This lamp works like a continuous *Elf-lights* spell, but its glow can be shut out if needed. You can snuff the lamp out to dazzle foes, or to put someone into an Enchanted Sleep, as per the normal *Wood-elf Magic* rules. The lamp then can be lit up again without paying a point of Hope.

- The Light of the Stars: Ormal teaches you how to bestow the blessing of Elbereth upon your magic. By spending a point of Hope, you may cause the light in your Lamp to burn with the pure light of the stars. This light flares for a limited time (a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom rating) but, while it burns, creatures of the Enemy cannot engage you in close combat unless they spend 3 Hate Points. Once the Light of the Stars goes out, your Lamp can be lit up again at the cost of one point of Hope.

The Halls of Thranduil

The Halls of the Elvenking began as a series of natural caverns, dug by the river in the distant past. When Amon Lanc was the capital of the Woodland Realm, the caves were used first for storage, then as a hunting lodge. Early in the Third Age, Thranduil moved his seat north, and declared that the caves would become his new palace. The Elves made the caves beautiful and bright, aided by Dwarven craftsmen from the north. The Dwarves burrowed into the hillside, opening up new caves and delving high-ceilinged passages.

To outsiders, the halls can be confusing, for they follow the natural flow of the water. There are a great many side passages and smaller caves and tunnels that jut off from the main halls. In time of war, the entire population of the Woodland Realm could find safety here.

The passages are lit by magic lamps or torchlight. The air is clean and fresh, and the tunnels are not at all cramped or confining (unless you are confined in one of the many cells, of course).

1. **The Magic Doors:** These doors are enchanted by the Elvenking, and obey his commands. He can make them open or close with a moment's thought, and they swing shut with astounding speed. Once closed, it would take a rampaging dragon to break them open again.

2. **Thranduil's Hall:** Thranduil rules from this many-pillared hall. It is here that he receives ambassadors and hears pleas from his subjects, and it is here that his court gathers. Thranduil has many advisors and dignitaries at his court — princes and ambassadors, sages and poets, heroes and healers. Most are Elves, of course. Only a few mortals, mostly visitors from Lake-town, have ever been admitted to the halls. Tapestries on the walls tell the stories of the deeds of the Elves in Middle-earth.

3. **Feast-halls:** The upper halls are used for feasting and sport during the cold winter months, when the Great Clearing is covered with snow. Other halls are used for private meetings, councils and recitals of stories and songs. One of the Feast-halls hides a secret passage that leads out through an escape tunnel.

4. **Kitchens:** The Elves of Mirkwood are excellent cooks, and can put a little magic into their food. Stags roast in roaring fireplaces, huge pots bubble and boil, and the enticing smell of fresh bread wafts from the stone ovens. The Master of the Kitchens is one of the most important Elves in the Halls, and her word is law in this domain.

5. **Bedchambers:** Only a few Elves live in the Halls. Most of those who have rooms here are either knights or nobles of the court, or servants in the palace.

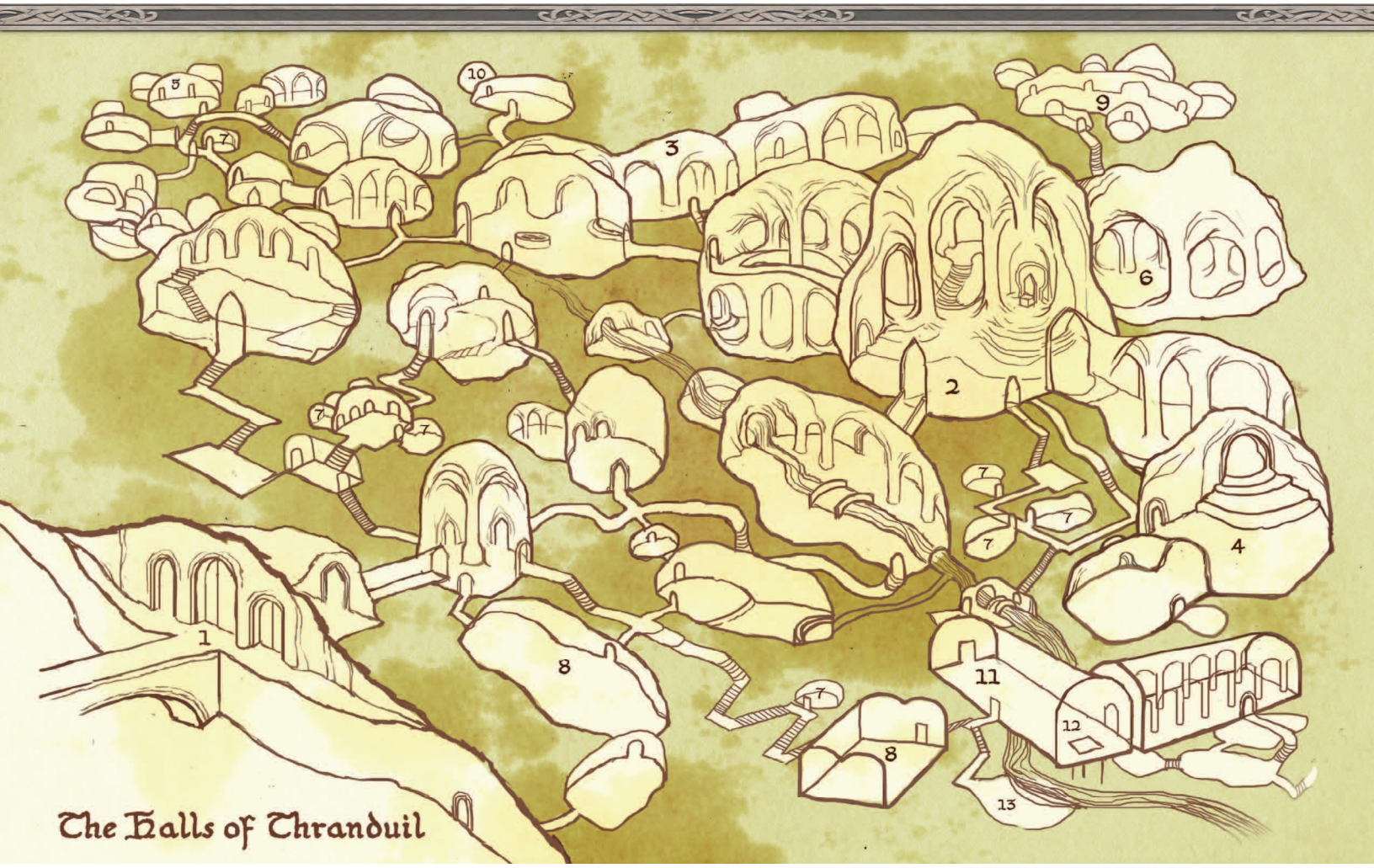
There are a number of comfortable guest rooms on this level too. The bedchambers have wooden beds with mattresses and pillows filled with cloud-soft down. Many Elves need not sleep as mortals do – they can rest their minds in the strange paths of Elvish dreams while walking in the waking world, but sometimes they choose to rest for pleasure.

6. **Elvenking's Apartments:** Thranduil lives in these rooms when he is in the palace. When he is off hunting, he usually leaves one of his sons as seneschal. The rooms are guarded night and day by warriors of the Woodland Realm, for this is a land under siege. Another secret passage winds down from these apartments to the cells and vaults below.

7. **Cells:** The dungeons of the Elvenking are not unpleasant as such places go – the Elves do not mistreat their prisoners, not even Dwarves. Still, these cells have stout doors and are hard to escape. There are many cells scattered throughout the halls, so that prisoners may be separated and questioned individually. The Elves rarely take prisoners – only trespassing mortals are brought here. Orcs and other things of darkness are dealt with on the spot.

8. **Storerooms:** These rooms and the cellars below contain great stocks of food and drink, enough not only for the feasts of the Elves, but to withstand a siege should war come to the halls. Here too are weapons and armour to outfit an army, including Dwarf-wrought swords and spears, talismans from Hollin and further afield, relics of lost Gondolin and vanished Nargothrond.

9. **Vaults:** The treasure-vaults of the Elvenking are rich in silver and gold, as well as gemstones. His hoard is not as large as that of the other Elf-lords, for the



Woodland Elves are not miners and crafters like the folk of Eriador. Still, his wealth is fabulous by the standards of the north, and only the Dragon had a larger hoard. The vault is guarded by a magical door, like the ones that protect the entrance to the halls. Only Thranduil knows the magic words that command the door to open.

10. **Innermost Cell:** This is where Thorin Oakenshield was imprisoned. It is an especially secure cell used for important 'guests'.

11. **The Cellars:** The Halls of Thranduil are part of a natural cave system. The upper cellars are worked stone like the rest of the halls, but if you keep exploring, you soon find your way into the warren of natural passages and caverns beneath the halls. The Goblins of the Mountains of Mirkwood would dearly love to find a way to tunnel into the cellars from below, but have yet to find a connecting passageway in the depths of the earth.

12. **Trapdoor:** This trapdoor opens onto the underground stream that soon joins the Forest River. A complex apparatus of ropes and pulleys lets the Elves lift cargo off rafts on the river below. In fact, they could lift a whole boat out of the river if needed. To return empty barrels to Lake-town, they just drop them through the trapdoor and let the current carry them back to Esgaroth.

13. **Secret Harbour:** This cave lies at the head of the underground stream. The Elves keep boats and rafts here. The current at the entrance to the cave is fierce and runs past jagged rocks, so only those who know the river well can bring boats in here.

Western Mirkwood

Western Mirkwood is a tangle of thick woodland. Many parts of it are impenetrable – oak and hazel and thorn wound together with poison ivy and brambles. Other parts are treacherously marshy. Streams run down off the Mountains of Mirkwood and vanish amid the roots of the trees, turning the land into cloying muck.

A valley runs across the region from west to east, and the Old Forest Road follows this course. The land therefor slopes up as you travel east, and dips down then rises again when going north to south. The eastern part is especially hilly, and an unwary traveller can find himself lost in a maze of box canyons and tree-covered slopes too steep to climb.

Wildlife

In the west, there are squirrels and other small mammals, and even a few wolves and deer. Bears live in the higher ground to the east. The marshy regions are home to a peculiar breed of frog, whose booming croaks echo through the forest at night. The frogs feed on the flies, of which there are millions, including stinging ones and ones that suck blood. The woodmen even tell of insects the size of small dogs who bumble through the air and nest in the treetops.

Spiders infest the eastern part of the forest; their webs are so thick in places that they drag down the trees with their

weight. The cunning Spiders have learned to use this to their advantage, and can topple the trees down on tougher foes.

Inhabitants

Western Mirkwood is virtually uninhabited. In the area north of the Old Forest Road, Men who give allegiance to Beorn cut the trees for firewood, but they never stay inside the forest's edge after dark. The Woodmen township of Woodland Hall is located near the southern edge of the forest, and the woods surrounding it are more wholesome than most inside Mirkwood. Long ago, the Woodmen started to clear a wedge in the forest, to make it easier to travel to Woodland Hall. As the Shadow in Dol Guldur grows, the Woodmen speak of clearing more land in Western Mirkwood, or even of building a new town close to the Old Ford.

At the time when the Old Forest Road was crowded with travellers, several villages and large groups of farmsteads appeared in this area, as the traffic along the road brought Men to these parts. Most of them were Northmen, but some few came out of the Southlands, from as far as the realm of Gondor. These southerners brought with them the art of building in stone; while these Men have long disappeared from Wilderland, the ruins of their works remain, overgrown with ivy and broken by tree-roots.

Before the Battle of Five Armies, Orcs might also be encountered in Western Mirkwood along the Old Forest Road, but they fled after the battle at Erebor.

Notable Characters

Geirbald Kinslayer

Geirbald is a Woodman, of the House of Woodland Hall. In years past, he was accounted a great hunter and warrior among his people. On one hunt, the Werewolf of Mirkwood attacked their company; young Geirbald bore a bitter hatred of the beast, and loosed arrow after arrow at it, hoping to slay it. Even when his companions were scattered and the beast leapt away into the underbrush, he kept shooting until his quiver was empty. The next morning, scouts found the body of Geirbald's younger sister lying in the bushes. One of her brother's reckless arrows killed her. Stricken with guilt and horror, Geirbald fled Woodland Hall. Since then, he has lived in the forest as an outlaw. A dozen warriors joined him, and together the thirteen roam the deep forests, hunting Orcs and Wolves. Their chief camp is in Western Mirkwood, and they winter there. Some of Geirbald's men are still welcome in Woodland Hall and Woodmen-town, but others are ill-favoured men, or outlaws, or madmen.

These outlaws rarely prey on travellers or commit crimes. They are called outlaws because they are not part of any of the Houses of the Woodmen, and so are outside the law of society.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Mirkwood-Lore, Beast-Lore
Distinctive Features: Hardened, True-Hearted
Relevant skills: Hunting ♦♦♦♦♦, Long-hafted Axe ♦♦♦
Endurance: 17

Joining the Brotherhood of Outlaws

Companions with a taste for the dangerous life of outlaws may be interested in joining Geirbald's men. To join their Brotherhood, the characters must find their camp and impress them in some way, a matter for an Adventuring phase. Then, during the following Fellowship phase, the company should open the camp of the Outlaws as a sanctuary, and swear a binding oath to aid their outlaw brothers, no matter what the situation. In return, the Outlaws will aid their brethren without complaint, but will not join on adventures and quests unless there is some clear benefit to them.

A character who joins the Outlaws may read the secret signs that Geirbald has taught them to leave throughout Mirkwood, and may find the hidden Outlaw camps hidden in the Western Caves with an EXPLORE roll at TN 14 (without knowledge of these secret signs, the TN to find such a camp is TN 20). These camps are not so comfortable and secure to be considered sanctuaries, but provide a place to rest and recuperate in relative safety.

Bofri son of Bofur

This young Dwarf was sent by King Dáin to the Woodmen of Mirkwood with a royal command. Bofri's mission is to examine the state of the Old Forest Road and determine if it could be re-opened.

Bofri is brave and clever, and eager to see the world. His father, one of the companions of Thorin Oakenshield, is today a Dwarf of wealth and influence under the Mountain, but Bofri intends to match his deeds. He plans to live among the Woodmen for a few years, learning the ways of the wood before exploring the Road and discovering which of the old keeps and fortifications survive.

Attribute level: 3
Specialities: Stone-Craft, Map-Making
Distinctive Features: Energetic, Adventurous.
Relevant skills: Explore ♦♦♦, Craft ♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 21

Notable Places

The Old Forest Road

The Dwarf-road (*Men-i-Naugrim* in the Elvish tongue) is a wonder of the northern world. It runs for two hundred miles across the middle of Mirkwood, and is the dividing line between the north and south parts of the forest. The road is ten feet wide, and paved with stone. The western part of the road uses stone brought from the vales of Anduin, but the eastern portion was quarried in the Mountains of Mirkwood. The road is flanked on either side by a ditch for drainage and a raised stone embankment to keep the forest back. The Dwarves built a waystation every twenty miles. These were sturdy stone buildings with extensive cellars and stables for ponies. They also built three larger keeps, one at either end of the road and the third roughly halfway. The Westfort which once stood at the western end of the road is gone, as Northmen quarried it for stone long ago. Most of the smaller waystations are either gone the same way or swallowed by the forest.

The Dwarves laid mighty spells on the road to keep it whole and clear for travel, and there are long stretches where their works still hold sway. A traveller in the wood might stumble upon a section of the road that is still intact; walking upon such a stretch of the Old Forest Road feels like advancing along a Dwarven tunnel — the stone-paved floor is covered by dirt and leafmould and weeds, but no plants have yet broken through the tiny joints between the slabs; overhead and to either sides the trees grow so thickly together that they form a roof and walls. Such clear sections can provide a short cut through the woods, but they are often watched by unwelcoming eyes.

For most of the roadway, though, the forest has triumphed. Trees colonised first the earthen ditches, and then broke through the paved surface. Roots dug through the stone, then the foundations until they found the living earth beneath. The only trace left of the road in many places is an unusual discolouration of the underbrush.

The tract of road traversing Western Mirkwood is mostly overgrown. The Woodmen call it the *Winter Trail*, for its route is clearly visible in winter when the trees are bare, and shun it as a haunted place. Orcs crossing Mirkwood usually follow the road where they can, for much of the forest is as dangerous to their kind as it is to everyone else.

The Barrows of the Northmen

Other clans of Northmen once lived in these woods, before those who dwell here today. Their names and deeds have been forgotten, and weeds grow through the ruins of their halls, but the land still holds their bones. Nine rows of long barrows stand beneath the trees. On certain nights of the year, eerie lights flicker above the graves like little candles. The Woodmen say that if you follow these lights, they will lead you to buried treasure — or lure you into the darkest reaches of the woods, then vanish, leaving you to die in some lonely glade.

Some chieftains of these forgotten Northmen came to serve the Enemy in life, a shame no living Man remembers today. But those who bent the knee before Sauron in life may also obey him in death, and those barrows are haunted by hungry wights (See also the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

The White Statues

Deep in the western woods, a traveller may come upon a strange sight indeed — a white marble statue of a woman, standing amid the dark trees. Then, he glimpses another statue, and another, and another, men and women and children. All are so lifelike that it beggars belief. Some are caught in a moment of terror; others stand calmly, staring out at the trees. Despite the thick undergrowth around them, few of the statues are covered in moss or weeds.

No-one knows who made these statues. Perhaps the Dwarves carved them from marble cut from the Mountains of Mirkwood during idle evenings when they built the Forest Road. The Woodmen whisper of an evil wizard who cursed his enemies and turned them to stone; the Beornings claim that the statues sometimes move when no-one is looking.

The Mountains of Mirkwood

The Mountains of Mirkwood are also called the *Dark Mountains*, from their old name in the Elvish tongue. They rise dark and desolate from the forest, and are divided into two parts — the larger group to the north that are the true Mountains, and the southern Haunted Hills. A wooded pass divides the two, and the Old Forest Road runs through this gap. The trees in the pass are oak and beech, but tall pines dominate the upland regions.

East, the mountains descend to rolling hills and mounds, all cloaked in tangled pines and mossy willows. The land grows progressively wetter as it approaches the southern marshes; weeds and vines hang heavy from the trees.

The peaks of the mountains are bald, and are snow-covered except in the height of summer. They are very treacherous; their rocky slopes conceal many deadfalls and narrow ravines. Landslides are not uncommon, as if the trees relaxed their grip on the soil and let it roll downhill. The lowlands are just as hard to cross, as thick weeds and clinging plants fill the forest floor.

Wildlife

In the lowlands, especially towards the east and south, Spiders prey on squirrel and Orc alike. The Orcs — what few there are left in Mirkwood, after the Battle of Five Armies — stick to the Old Forest Road and the foothills of the mountains. Spiders lurk on the road, but also string their webs between the gnarled trees. Gore-crows nest in the treetops, croaking their hateful songs.

The mountain caves are home to bats in uncountable numbers. These bats leave their underground abodes at night by the thousands, and spread out for miles against the dark sky over Mirkwood, to reach the marshes and hunt for insects and other prey. Some of the bigger bats eat lizards, rabbits or even sheep — or so say the shepherds of Lake-town. Vampires dwell in the deeper caves and among the Elven ruins in the northern foothills. These horrors, spirits from the Elder Days who wear the appearance of bats, abhor sunlight, but go abroad by night to feast on blood.

Wolves creep around the northern slopes of the mountains, but shy away from the west. Somewhere in that desolate tree-lined maze is the black lair of the Werewolf of Mirkwood.

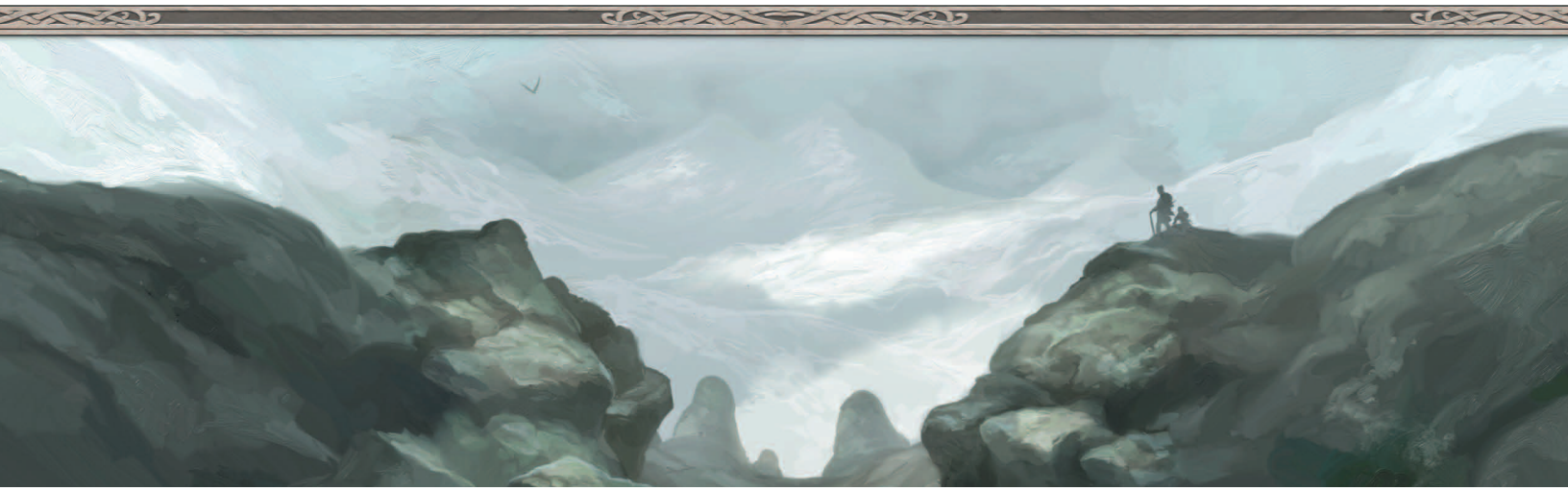
Inhabitants

No Free Peoples live in the Mountains of Mirkwood, or in the surrounding woods. Elven hunters and scouts might cross the Elf-path and explore the wooded hills, fishermen might wander into the eastern eaves, but no living soul willingly dwells in this haunted land. Orcs once dwelt in great numbers beneath the Mountains, but most of them perished in the Battle of Five Armies. Slaves taken by these Orcs in the past were imprisoned in the caves under the mountains, but with the crowning of a King in Dale, the Goblins dare not cross the marshes.

Notable Characters

The Werewolf of Mirkwood

The Werewolf of Mirkwood is a spirit in wolf-form. In the Elder Days, it prowled alongside Dragons and other fell creatures in the armies of the Enemy, and guarded the



gates of his fortresses. It feasted on the flesh of Elves and Men, and grew large and strong and ever more ferocious until no foe could stand against it in battle. Despite its strength, the Werewolf was destroyed. Elves of old struck it with blinding light, and brought it down with a hail of arrows and spears. Disembodied, the spirit fled sightless and witless, and hid in the caves under the Dark Mountains. There it slumbered for many ages, until the Enemy returned to Dol Guldur.

Sauron could not tame the Werewolf, nor did he wish to. A stray beast was of more use to him than another obedient minion. The Werewolf's attacks would draw attention away from Dol Guldur, giving him more time to prepare. Through his sorcery, he taught the Werewolf to possess the body of a living wolf, filling it with the spirit's power and malice. Since then, the Werewolf of Mirkwood has roamed the woods, driven by its unquenchable bloodthirst.

The creature cannot be slain — or, rather, its body may be destroyed, but the spirit can then inhabit another wolf, and another, and another. The Werewolf is a constant threat to all the Free Peoples in Mirkwood. The Werewolf of Mirkwood is described on pages 83 and 117 of the Loremaster's Guide. Should the werewolf be slain, it rises again in a new body on the next moonless night.

The Return of the Nazgûl

"The dark things that were driven out in the year of the Dragon's fall have returned..."

In the Year 2951 of the Third Age, the Enemy dispatches three of the Nine to Dol Guldur, to restore his fortress and to reawaken the evil things of Mirkwood. While *The Heart of the Wild* assumes a starting date of 2946, before the Nazgûl arrive, the presence of the three is such an important factor in the affairs of Mirkwood that we include them here for completeness. These three Ringwraiths play a much greater role in the *Darkening of Mirkwood* campaign — indeed, they are the Darkening, the hand of the Shadow extending over the green land.

The Ghost of the Forest

The Ghost of the Forest is one of the three Ringwraiths sent north by Sauron. Of the others, one remains in Dol Guldur, and one serves as a messenger between Mirkwood and Mordor. The third Ringwraith's role is to awaken all the evil things in the wood and bind them to Sauron's command. In this time, the Nine mostly go abroad unclad and invisible, and cannot be seen by mortals. Even the Wood-elves can perceive them only as a creeping shadow.

The Ghost of the Forest is a thing of horror and darkness. He is a whispering voice in the shadows, a chill in the air that stops the heart, a weaver of malice. The Ghost flits through Mirkwood, from Dol Guldur to the northernmost trees, inspiring terror as he goes. He visits the Orcs in the caves, bidding them march to Dol Guldur. He gathers the Wargs, making them assemble in great packs. He goads the Werewolf of Mirkwood to redouble its attacks.

The Ghost does not neglect the mortal Men who live within the forest. To evil Men, he is a shadowy presence that promises power if they do his master's bidding. He whispers to the greedy and the weak-souled, sowing dissent and hatred among the Woodmen and the merchants travelling to Dale and Lake-town. He poisons the hearts and minds of good men, sapping their spirits and weakening them.

The Great Vampire

When the world was young and the wood was green, a Great Vampire dwelt in the Mountains of Mirkwood. The mountains were a grim and frightful place even then, before the Shadow fell fully upon them. The Elves built their Refuge in the bright valleys, and turned their gaze away from the foreboding hills.

The vampire — an ancient spirit in the shape of a bat — troubled the Elves, and Prince Thranduil went in hunt of the monster. He found the Vampire's lair in a nightmarish chasm deep beneath the mountains, and climbed down to battle her. The vampire's dreadful spells bewitched the prince's guards, and Thranduil was forced to fight alone.

Songs are still sung, more than three thousand years later, of the duel of the vampire and the Elf-prince. The two fought for a day, as the vampire stalked Thranduil through the lightless caves. In the end, Thranduil found a crack that led out into the open air, just as dawn was breaking. The vampire wriggled through the crack after Thranduil, but was blinded by the sudden light, and the Elf took the opportunity to behead the vile creature. While the lesser spawn continue to blight Mirkwood, the defeat of the Great Vampire was a grievous blow against the Enemy.

The potential return of the Great Vampire is explored in *The Darkening of Mirkwood*.

Notable Places

Ruins of the Refuge

When the Shadow first fell upon the wood, the Elves built a fortified town in the mountains. They ringed this place with silver beeches, and hid there many of the treasures they took from their old halls at Amon Lanc. The Elves abandoned the refuge nearly 1,500 years later, as the Shadow returned with greater strength and loosed the Werewolf of Mirkwood upon them.

Today, the Refuge is mostly ruined. A few overgrown walls still stand, and the Orcs cruelly cut down the silver beeches beloved by the Elves. Still, there remain hidden chambers concealed with cunning spells, where Elven scouts rest when travelling in the south. Men tell tales of gold and jewels hidden in the elven ruins.

Resting in the Refuge

Finding an intact part of the Refuge requires an EXPLORE test (TN14 plus the character's current Shadow point total). If the test succeeds, the character is able to find one of the hidden chambers that are still protected by the magic of the Elves. Members of a company may rest in such a chamber to reduce their Fatigue. However, after each night spent in the Refuge, the Loremaster rolls the Feat die: on an , Orcs or other monsters discover the company's hiding place and they can no longer rest here. On any other result, the company may continue to rest in the Refuge.

The Undermountains

There are tunnels under the forest, spreading from the Mountains of Mirkwood but extending far beyond their reaches. The deepest roots of the trees are not deep enough to find them all. Orcs and bats cluster in these Undermountains, and worse things crawl deeper still.

There are few Orcs in Mirkwood. Even during the years when the Necromancer reigned in Dol Guldur and drew all the evils of the forest under his banner, there were not many Orcs in his service. The great Orc-holds of Wilderland are in the Misty Mountains and in the Grey Mountains, south and east of the city under Mount Gundabad. The Orcs of Mirkwood are mostly found hiding in the upper caverns of the Undermountains, which are reached by steep-sided holes and ravines gaping wide in the forest. These are small, mean Goblins, long of limb and sharp of tooth, miserable beasts preyed on by Spiders and Elves alike (see also the Monsters of the Wild chapter, page 111).

Other, far older things live in the deeper caves of the Undermountains, things that were never named by the Elves. These caves were sealed by the Elves in the First Age, lest the crawling squirming horrors should emerge from the darkness and bring woe to the world. So far, these abominations have remained contained in the caves, and not even the Necromancer dared to crack the seals. The things are older than he is; they were born from the malice of Morgoth before the world was made.

The Beacon Tower

The Dwarves raised this castle when they built the Forest Road. It is located on a rocky promontory on the northern slopes of the Haunted Hills. The forest has reclaimed the castle walls and outbuildings, but the main keep and its tall tower stand proud of the surrounding trees. Mines and tunnels beneath the keep delve into the hillsides. The Dwarves found tin and iron in the Haunted Hills.

The tower endured many sieges by the forces of Dol Guldur, but no foe took it in battle. The Beacon Tower fell from within, when the Dwarves turned on each other. Today, the tower stands empty, although Orcs garrisoned it as a northern outpost of the Necromancer's realm in years past.

Spider Ravines

The Haunted Hills are riven by deep chasms and cracks, strung with thick webs. Some of the fattest, nastiest Spiders live in these dark valleys. Even before the Shadow fell on the forest, these hills were an evil, sullen place, home to ghosts and malicious spirits.

Sometimes, the webs quiver even when there is no wind, as if some unseen force clothes itself in spider-silk. The spiders bring the bodies of their victims here once they have sucked them dry, and the floor of the ravine is covered in white bone and webbing.

During the winter months, the Haunted Hills become especially dangerous. Snows blow down from the north and turn the hills into a wilderness of frozen trees and icy slopes. Unnatural cold makes the hills virtually impassable for nearly a third of the year. The only 'safe' way to pass through the Haunted Hills from the Mountains of Mirkwood to the Heart of Mirkwood is go to brave the ravines.

The Western Eaves

This tract of oakwood is the most thickly populated region in Mirkwood. Here dwell the Woodmen of Mirkwood. Their small hamlets and cottages are within a mile inside the forest edge — deep enough to offer protection from attackers, but not so far from their farmland. Their two larger settlements are hidden in the shadowy depths of the wood, and the trails to these refuges are well hidden and guarded by sentries. Whenever the Woodmen fear attackers, the farmers on the forest fringe pack up and bring their families and herds to the safety of Woodland Hall or Woodmen-town.

To the east of this region flows the Dusky River, which springs somewhere in the Haunted Hills and meanders west and south. The river's water is silted and dark, hence its name, but the water is drinkable — most of the time. Sometimes, animal carcasses — rotting and curiously misshapen, as if they were mutilated before they died — wash down from the Haunted Hills, and they carry with them illness and foul water.

The river is navigable, and the Woodmen use flat-bottomed boats to travel between Woodland Hall and Woodmen-town. The river empties into a wide lake called the Black Tarn. The still waters here are mirror-smooth and tranquil. Herons wade amid the reeds on the edges of the lake, hunting fish and eels. The southern edge of the lake is ringed by low wooded hills.

Hidden trails from the northern banks of the lake run through tangled pine-woods to the forest edge and the home of the wizard Radagast, Rhosgobel.

Parts of the Western Eaves, especially around the Woodman settlements, are almost pleasant. The Woodmen thinned the trees, letting a little sunlight filter through the canopy. They made clearings as woodland pasture for their herds. Children play in the bushes near Woodmen-town. Still, this is Mirkwood — the pall of darkness still hangs heavy, even under the noonday sun. There is no safety in Mirkwood. One of those running children might stray five minutes walk from home, and find herself utterly lost amid unfamiliar trees.

Wildlife

Boars and deer are common on the western edge of the woods. The bows and spears of the Woodmen drove away the wolves that once hunted here. Black sparrows and pheasants live in the trees here.

The Woodmen keep herds of sheep, cows and pigs. The black pigs they keep in the forest, letting them forage for acorns and roots in the black oak woods west of the Dusky River. The other animals graze on the fertile lands of the East Anduin Vales, and dislike being brought into the forest. When the Woodmen are forced to bring their herds into the wood for safe keeping, they must also be on watch for signs of madness — animals from outside the forest sometimes panic and rush off into the darkness, and one bolting sheep can scatter a whole herd. Strangely — perhaps because they interbreed with the wild boar of the woods — the pigs seem untroubled by the forest.

Around the Dusky River, and especially along the Black Tarn, live many river-birds, and fishes in plenty swim under the surface of the waters. The river forms a natural boundary against the Spiders, who dare not cross the water. The Woodmen keep careful watch on their northern and southern borders to stop Spiders creeping around the river, and must be equally careful when boating on its surface. The Spiders cannot swim, but sometimes they crawl out onto branches that overlook the stream and dangle sticky strands of webbing down into the path of approaching boats, like monstrous fishermen.

Inhabitants

This is the land of the Woodmen. Less than a quarter of those who call themselves Woodmen actually live deep in the forest. Some live in the shadows of the Misty Mountains, at Mountain Hall, but most live on the edge of the woods. Still, Mirkwood is their home and their refuge, and the burial mounds of their ancestors are at the roots of the ancient trees.

Notable Characters

The River-Maidens

Three nature-spirits, called the River-Maidens, dwell in the Black Tarn. One is seen most often in the fast-flowing upper part of the Dusky River. She is the youngest of the three, and the most shy. Only rarely does she appear, and only to children or those who are especially kind or in need. Silverbell is her name. A second maiden is encountered frequently in the middle section of the river. She is a friend to the Woodmen, sometimes guiding their

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Go Hunting with the Woodmen

Few creatures in the forest of Mirkwood are good to eat, but some are surprisingly tasty. Companions spending a fellowship phase in Woodland Hall, Woodmen-town or Rhosgobel may hunt with the Woodmen in Mirkwood. When a companion chooses this undertaking, he first makes a HUNTING test, followed by a roll on the table below. This second roll is modified by +1 if the hero possesses the Beast-lore speciality, +2 if the HUNTING roll was a great success, +4 if the HUNTING roll was an extraordinary success.

ᚠ	Choose any one result except *A Stag*, or roll again.
1	*Nothing Useful!* If you are a Woodman, reduce your Standing rating by 1 point for the duration of the next Adventuring Phase.
2-3	*Nuts and Berries:* The character fails to catch anything worthy of telling, but collects plenty of food for the Woodmen. If you are a Woodman, raise your Standing rating by 1 point for the duration of the next Adventuring Phase.
4-5	*Good Hunt:* Gain an Advancement point in the Survival skill group.
6-7	*Great Hunt:* Gain one Advancement point each in the Movement and Survival skill groups.
8-9	*A Mighty Boar:* You brought home a fat forest boar, and everyone feasts! Gain 1 Experience point.
10	*A Stag:* You brought down one of the fabled stags of Mirkwood. Recover 1 point of Hope and gain 1 Experience point.
ᛟ	*Mirkwood Dark:* You wander into a dangerous region of the forest, and gain 1 Shadow point.

boats past danger, or making merry with them – and it is said that some Woodmen are descended from her dalliances. Her name among mortals is Sunshadow. The third maiden is seen only in the vicinity of the Black Tarn. She is the eldest of the three, and the wisest. She brings the Woodmen tidings of danger; when Spiders creep around the lake, or the Werewolf roams close, the maiden of the lake may warn the fisher-folk of their peril. Her name is rarely spoken aloud – it is Duskwater in the tongues of Men.

All three River-maidens usually appear as young women swimming just below the surface of the water, but they all may assume the shape of silver trouts, to best flee from a threat.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Mirkwood-lore, Swimming
Distinctive Features: Elusive, Fair
Relevant skills: Stealth ♦♦♦♦♦, Persuade ♦♦♦

Radagast the Brown

See the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 115 for information on Radagast the Brown.

Ingomer Axebreaker

The Woodmen of the forest have no king. Each House has a council of Elders, and important decisions are voted on by everyone who meets beneath the roof of the Great House. In time of need, the Woodmen follow the traditions of their ancestors and elect a war-leader, but he who is chosen remains in charge only for the duration of the threat — he is no chieftain or lord.

Ingomer Axebreaker of Woodland Hall, then, is no more important than any of the other old men who sit on the dais near the council fire. His words are given no more weight, his wisdom is not counted as any greater than the rest — but everyone east of the Great River knows that Ingomer rules the Hall. He is an old warrior, in his sixtieth summer, but he is still canny and brave. Few among the Woodmen are as respected as he is, and none have as much support among all four Houses of the people.

If the Woodmen of the forest ever chose a king, then they would likely name Ingomer Axebreaker. He fears that day, for Ingomer knows that one king leads to another, and that the Woodmen are too widely scattered for another, lesser king to rule them all without resorting to violence. Ingomer may have the respect and wisdom to bring Mountain Hall together with Rhosgobel, or into agreement with the sons of Balthi, but he doubts his heirs could ever do the same.

Ingomer's first son vanished in the forest when he was seven years old. His second son Iglund is his heir; jokes about Iglund's stupidity are bandied about Woodland Hall, but never where Ingomer can hear them.

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Enemy-Lore, Mirkwood-Lore
Distinctive Features: Forthright, Trusty
Relevant skills: Battle ♦♦♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦, Axe ♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 17

New Cultural Virtue: River-Blooded (Woodmen of Mirkwood only)

A secret about your heritage has been revealed to you — according to family tradition, one of your ancestors was a lover of one of the River-Maidens, and she left him with a child to raise. You are descended from that child.

You automatically succeed at any ATHLETICS roll related to boating or swimming, and all your Attribute bonuses are based on your Favoured rating when on or near the Dusky River. Furthermore, you may understand the speech of the black herons that live along the riverbanks.

Notable Places

Rhosgobel

Radagast the Brown has dwelt here for many years. The name 'Rhosgobel' means 'Brown Hay' or Hedge, referring to the thorny barrier that protects the village from the evils of the forest, and that makes Rhosgobel one of the safer settlements in Mirkwood even when the wizard is not at home.

Radagast is something between an eccentric old great-uncle and a living god to the people of Rhosgobel. Most of the time, the wizard is just another old man snoozing in the sun or telling stories of the old days, but everyone in Rhosgobel has seen him performing little magic tricks or healing sick children.

Sometimes, though, Radagast puts forth his power, and reminds the Woodmen that he is a wizard of great potency. All of the Woodmen are utterly devoted to him and would do anything for him.

1. **The 'Brown Hay':** This tall hedge surrounds Rhosgobel on three sides. On the fourth side, facing west, the Woodmen built earthen banks and walls of wooden stakes to defend themselves against attack. The hedge bristles with thorns and stinging weeds, and is strong enough to entangle the biggest, nastiest boar or even a Troll. As the Orcs of Dol Guldur discovered on past raids, the hedge is also too wet to burn easily, even in the height of summer.

2. **The Hedge-Gate:** The only gap in the hedge is this little door, carved with the image of a grinning face. Radagast made the door himself, and placed a great deal of his magic into it. If any enemy touches the door, it shrieks a warning. Some Woodmen insist that the door has been known to quietly eat smaller Spiders and other trespassers.

3. **The Great Hall:** The longhouse at the heart of Rhosgobel is the smallest of the halls of the Woodmen. It is easy to defend, with narrow doors, sturdy walls and lots of weapons close at hand. At the head of the hall, next to the chieftain's seat, is a special stool reserved for Radagast. It faces the Great River, with its back to the forest

4. **Woodman Cottages:** The small homes of the Woodmen. Each cottage, despite its size, houses an extended family. The houses are used only for sleeping and storage — almost every other activity is done communally.

5. **Cold Spring:** Rhosgobel is far from the Dusky River, so this icy-cold spring that wells out of the ground provides the settlement with water. The waters of the spring reflect Radagast's mood; they spurt when he is angry, trickle when he is sad, and bubble when he laughs.

6. **Forge:** The forge at Rhosgobel is an important asset for the Woodmen. Most of their metalwork comes from Mountain Hall, but repairs and day-to-day ironworking is done here.

7. **Radagast's House:** Well, usually. Radagast's house is almost as elusive as the Wizard himself. If Radagast wishes to be found, then his house is here in this grove of trees at the end of a little twisty path of crushed white stone. If the Wizard is away or wishes privacy, then there is no house to be found. Radagast's cottage looks like an explosion in a *mathom*-house that was then colonised by woodland creatures. Squirrels and field mice scurry through piles of books and scrolls, and crows perch on rafters from which cloaks, weapons and gardening tools hang.

8. **The Wizard's Garden:** This garden was once within the grove of trees, until one day it wasn't. Here is where Radagast grows all sorts of medicinal plants and herbs, as well as the best vegetables east of Bagshot Row.

9. **Animal Pens:** As Rhosgobel is closest to the forest's edge, it is home to the majority of the Woodmen's animal herds. During harsh winters, the herders bring these animals here to these sheds so they can huddle together for warmth and shelter.

Woodmen-town

The oldest settlement of the Woodmen was founded by the folk of Balthi long ago. He brought the Lamp out of the darkness, and the light of the Lamp has ever protected Woodmen-town and its inhabitants.

The town nestles on the banks of the Dusky River, which blocks attacks from the east. The Woodmen also use the river to travel back and forth between Woodmen-town and Woodland Hall.

The Woodmen of Woodmen-town are proud and brave. Theirs is an ancient heritage, stretching back nearly a thousand years. To a civilised traveller from Dale or Gondor, they may look like rough wild Men of the woods, but the folk of Woodmen-town consider their lineage to be the equal of that of any king.

Woodmen-town faces a precarious existence. Spiders and other horrors out of the wood assail them regularly. Still, they have endured here for nine hundred years, and made this wood their home.

1. **Great Hall:** Also known as the House of Balthi or the Hall of the Lamp, for the Lamp hangs from the roof of this building. On special feast-days or times of need, the Lamp is brought out and hung from a carved pole so that its light may be clearly seen for miles around.

2. **Palisade:** A wall of stakes to block attackers. The Woodmen have fought many different foes and learned the best way to deal with each of them. The wooden walls hold back Orcs and raiders. Dog packs watch for wolves that might slip through gaps in the palisade. Specially grown thorns prevent Spiders

from crawling over the top. Children gather bunches of fragrant herbs that are then burnt to drive away the stench of noisome vapours and evil spirits. The wall is as strong as any wall can be in Mirkwood.

3. **Market Green:** Woodmen-town stands midway between Rhosgobel and Woodland Hall, so it is where the Woodmen come to trade and talk. The Market Green is a low grassy mound used for both markets and councils of war.

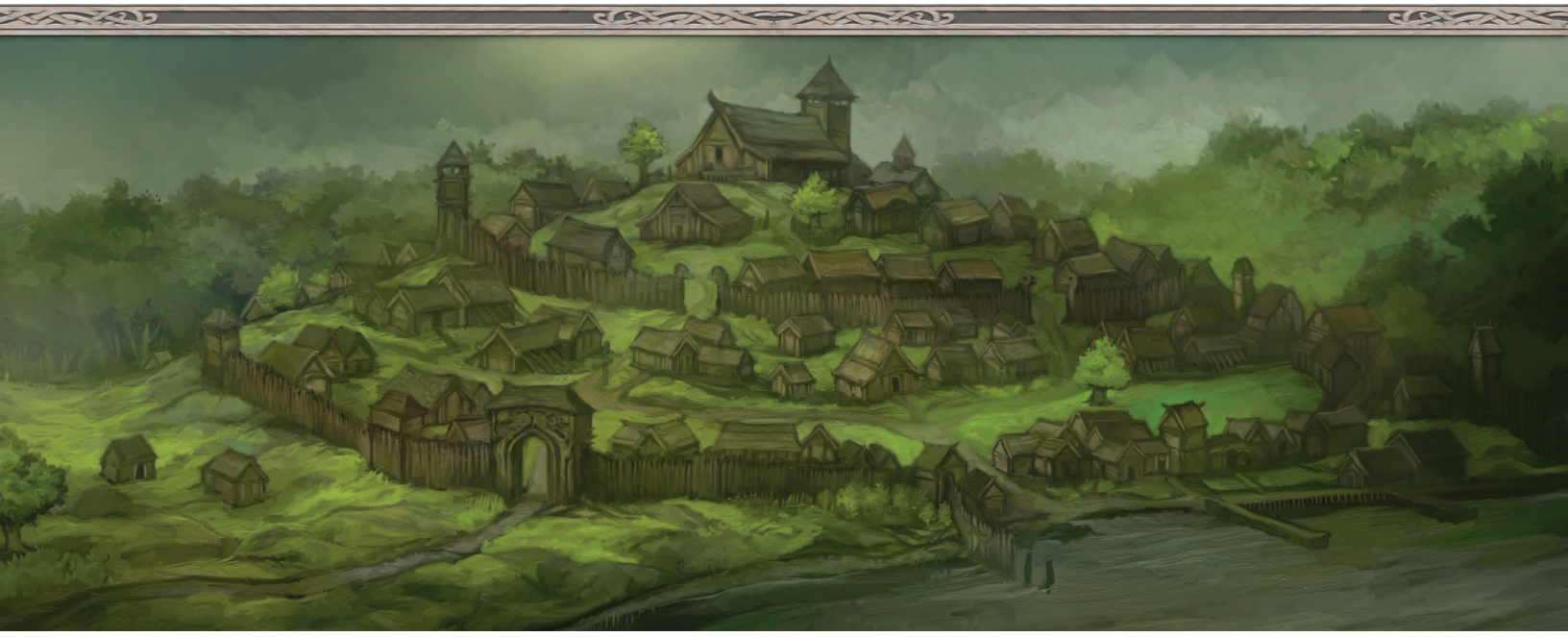
4. **Docks:** The Dusky River runs close to the edge of the town. The Woodmen use small, sturdy boats made from dug-out tree trunks to navigate the river. Larger rafts carry cargos up to Woodland Hall or down to the villages along the Black Tarn.

5. **Guest Houses:** As many folk from the other settlements visit Woodmen-town, they maintain these guest-houses. Normally, guests stay in the Great Hall, but there is not always space there. The original guest-houses were once inhabited by residents of Woodmen-town, but many people abandoned this settlement when the shadow returned to Mirkwood.

6. **Kennels:** The folk of Woodmen-town were the first to tame the hounds of Mirkwood, who are — it is said — descended from the hound-companion of Beren, a great hero of Men in the First Age.

Woodland Hall

Woodland Hall — *Wuduseld* in the language of the Vales of Anduin — is the youngest but also the largest of the Woodman settlements in Mirkwood.



Those fleeing the returning Shadow in the south chose this place around five hundred years ago, and they built their first home atop a defensible mound. They found that the northern forests gave good hunting, and attracted many settlers from both the southern settlements and outside Mirkwood.

The folk of *Wuduseld* are the friendliest and most open of the Woodmen. They have the most contact with the Beornings and the Elves, and are somewhat sheltered from the worst evils of the forest. However, without the protection of powerful allies like Radagast, they are especially vulnerable to the threat of the Shadow.

1. **Woodland Hall:** The proper *Wuduseld*, the Great House stands on a steep-sided hill. Generations of work by the Woodmen cut away the sides of the hill, so now there is only a single path leading up to the flat top, making it very easy to defend. Woodland Hall is a magnificent structure, more than twice as large as any other Great Hall and richly decorated with all manner of carvings and tapestries.

2. **Hedge and Stockade:** The intricate hedge surrounding the village is the tallest the Woodmen have ever raised west of the forest. It is reinforced by an ancient stockade, raised atop an earthen rampart. The older stakes composing the wooden barrier are intricately wound with carvings, and are considered to magically protect the hall.

3. **Caves:** These caves at the base of the cliff are cool even in the height of summer, and so are used to store meat and other perishable goods. The eastern caves become partially flooded at times, and the River-maidens have been seen sporting there.

4. **Watchposts:** Platforms atop these tall trees provide advance warning of any approaching threat. The thick forest canopy hides most movement, but the Woodmen are adept at spotting shaking leaves or the sudden flight of birds that signal the presence of an intruder. Each look-out is trained to imitate the whistles and calls of various birds so they can communicate with each other secretly, and each watchpost has a horn to sound to alert the town below.

5. **Tree Houses:** The big oak trees in this forest support a small number of very old tree-houses of considerable size, built by the early settlers of Woodland Hall. A few solitary individuals still inhabit them, as they believe that in Mirkwood you are safer in the treetops than on the ground. Some of these Woodmen boast that they were ten years old before their feet ever touched the ground.

6. **Docks**: North of this point, the Dusky River becomes too narrow and swift to be easily navigable, but there is a wide and still pool here for the boats to dock.

7. **Woodland Road:** In years past, ambitious Woodmen dreamed of cutting a path through the forest to the north-west, to emerge close to the Old Ford. The elders of the Woodmen objected — they feared that if such a road was opened, enemies could easily follow it into the forest and the protection of Mirkwood would be lost. Instead, the Woodmen cut several sections of the road, leaving forested gaps between each section. Each section was a smooth, well-maintained path through the forest along which a traveller or even a horse and cart could move quickly, but it ended abruptly.

   Only an experienced guide knew where the next section of road lay. Using the Woodland Road could cut the travel time between Woodland Hall and the Old Ford by several days. The Woodland Road is no longer maintained, and most of the road sections are now choked with new growth. Still, travellers in Mirkwood may still happen upon an odd long clearing that runs straight for a few miles before vanishing again.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Enter Wuduseld

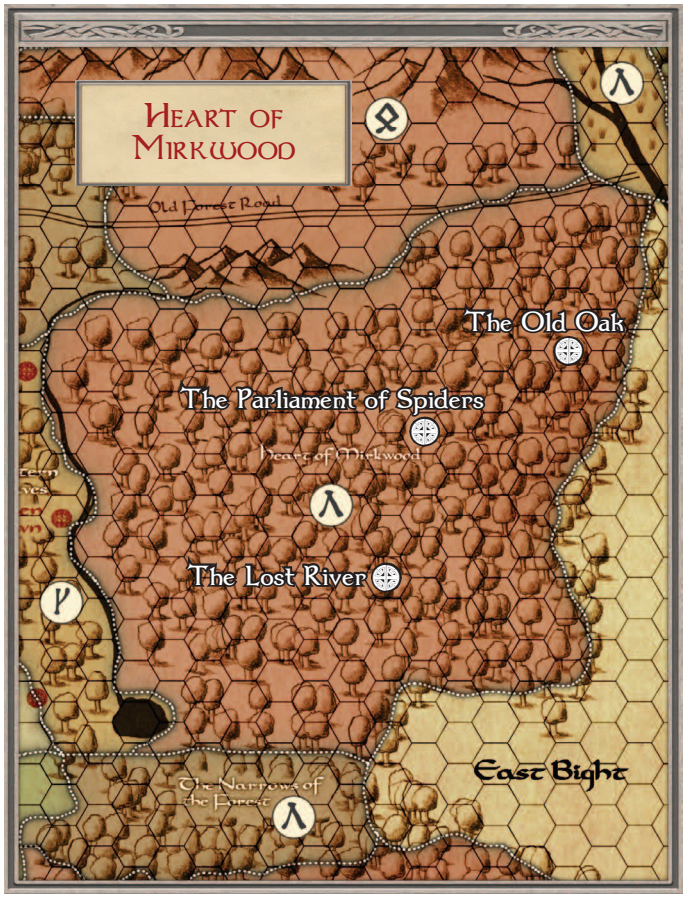
The carvings of the Great Hall of Wuduseld are a sight to behold. They are a magnificent testimony of the long history of the Woodmen and their wandering across Wilderland. Many tales are depicted in astonishing detail on the walls of the hall, along each pillar, rafter and beam.

A companion spending a Fellowship phase at Woodland Hall may choose this undertaking and gain the benefits of the *Old-lore* speciality for the duration of the following Adventuring phase. If the character already has *Old-lore*, then he may gain two benefits from a single Trait invocation (for example, he could automatically succeed at a roll *and* gain an Advancement point).

Heart of Mirkwood

The Heart of Mirkwood is a trackless forest of oak and dark fir, thick and old and strong. Even at their height, the Elves rarely came here, as they could sense a malice lying dormant within the intricate groves of trees. Now the Elves are gone, and while a land never wholly forgets the presence of the Firstborn, the forest's memories are bitter and twisted. This land resents and hates all creatures that speak and walk on two legs. This hostility extends to Orcs and the other servants of the Necromancer. The Shadow fell on Mirkwood long ago, but this is not Sauron's wood, not yet. His power reaches ever deeper into the forest as he tries to master Mirkwood. In time, the forest may come to serve him as the land of Mordor serves him. Until then, this is a dark, wild region unfriendly to all strangers.

The Heart is deep. It covers hundreds of square miles of forest, but mere distance does not convey the tangled, lightless horror of the woods. There are no trails, no landmarks, no signs of light, only the dark trees stretching to the horizon.



The south-western and north-eastern regions are both swampy, especially in spring when meltwater streams from the Haunted Hills and Mountains of Mirkwood. Parts of the south-eastern edge, along the East Bight, are comparatively traversable, but the central forest is beyond the skills of all but the greatest foresters and rangers.

Wildlife

The largest spider-colonies are found inside the Heart of Mirkwood. The Elves remember a time in the Elder Days when there were no Spiders in the forest, long long ago. They came out of the Southlands, scuttling across the wolds as if guided by some evil intent. The Spiders of the Heart of Mirkwood are as clever in their strange way as any Man. They do not build, but their spun webs are as large and sturdy and beautiful (in a horrific, inhuman way) as the greatest works of the Dwarves.

Some tales claim that truly gigantic spider-creatures, grandchildren of Ungoliant, dwell in the deepest reaches of the forest. These monsters are so huge that they rarely move, and instead are brought tribute by their countless spawn.

The Spiders have always been allies of the Enemy, if not always reliable ones. They rule the west and north of the region; elsewhere, a traveller might encounter bears, wolves or the huge boars that roam the woods. Once, wild kine and goats from the herds of the vanished Northmen might be found in the eaves of the forest, but the Spiders took them long ago.

Inhabitants

A few folk still dwell on the eastern edge of Mirkwood, but their numbers are dwindling. Many were the descendants of the people of Dale, and now that there is a King again, they are returning north to the lands of their forefathers. The other folk of this region are sullen, standoffish Northmen akin to the Woodmen, and exiles from Dorwinion. The soil east of Mirkwood makes for poor farming, and herding animals just attracts Spiders and wolves. Few men linger in this land for long.

Just north of the East Bight, within the forest eaves, dwell small tribes of Men. Whether they are the lost children of Northmen who took refuge in the woods, or a different, wilder folk altogether, none can guess and they themselves do not remember. These Wild Men speak their own strange tongue, and wear furs and tanned skins. They do not know the art of working metal, but carve eerie stone statues. Some say they fell under the influence of the Shadow long ago, and that they worship the Enemy as a cruel god.

Finally, other Men can be encountered in the Heart of Mirkwood, as the Spiders sometimes take slaves to serve them. These unfortunate victims obey their monstrous masters out of sheer terror, but sometimes are kept docile with venoms that dull the mind, or are crippled with bites to the legs (if the Spiders do not need the slave to go about).

Notable Characters

Gwina

Gwina is a trader and merchant from the land of Dorwinion. Her brightly painted boat is a common sight on the River Running as she hauls cargoes of wine up from the warm lands of the east. Unlike the other traders, who go straight to Esgaroth and consider the eastern Woodmen to be bandits and thieves, Gwina sometimes lingers in this region to trade with the settlements along the forest edge, and she sometimes winters in the north, making camp in Mirkwood.

Attribute level:	3
Specialities:	Boating, Trading
Distinctive Features:	Nimble, Merry
Relevant skills:	Athletic ♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦
Endurance:	15

Valdis

The line of Girion has fallen low indeed, for one of its daughters to be a murderous outlaw. Valdis is a direct descendant of the old kings of Dale; her great-grandfather was a young boy who was spirited out of the wreck of Dale when the Dragon came. Valdis grew up in Lake-town as a penniless beggar with dreams of lost glory. Her one companion was a strange mad raven of the mountain called Eyebiter. The raven has a taste for human flesh, especially the carrion of the battlefield.

In 2940, young Valdis stabbed a man in a tavern in Lake-town and fled into the wilderness. She is clever and charismatic, and dreams of returning to Dale as queen. She blames Bard for 'stealing' her throne, and believes that if she had been in Dale in 2941, she would have been the one to bring the Dragon down. Bard took her place in the prophecies, or so she claims.

Those who have played through *Kinstrife and Bad Tidings* from *Tales from Wilderland* anthology may notice a resemblance between Valdis and the warlord Valter the Bloody; they are both rotten fruit from the same family tree. Valter is her cousin, the son of her father's sister. If the player characters were responsible for slaying Valter the Bloody, then Eyebiter brought tidings of his death to Valdis, and she swore bloody vengeance upon those who slew her kin.

Valdis plays a role throughout *The Darkening of Mirkwood.*

Attribute level:	5
Specialities:	Esgaroth-lore, Intrigue
Distinctive Features:	Determined, Fair, Cunning
Relevant skills:	Hunting ♦♦♦, Battle ♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦♦
Endurance:	19

Tauler, Tyulqin and Sarqin

These three are the largest Spiders of Mirkwood, a forest inhabited by Giant Spiders. Tauler is a male; the other two are his sisters and his mates at times, but the three fight amongst each other for dominance. All three were spawned by Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant. (See also the Monsters of the Wild chapter on page 111).

Savage Tauler is the Hunter; he ranges from one end of the Heart of Mirkwood to the other, and sometimes even crosses over into the Western Eaves or troubles the borders of the Woodland Realm. He is strong enough to topple a deep-rooted oak with a twitch of his legs, and his jaws can bite through steel — and he is the least of the three.

Tyulqin is the Weaver. There is more of the dark power of her grandmother in her than in her siblings. Her magic webs can become invisible, or enmesh spirits, or extend into the dreams of her prey. Her fangs drip with a dozen different forms of venom, each more dangerous than the last.

Sarqin is Mother to half the Spiders in Mirkwood. Her bloated form rests in a sagging web strung atop a deep pit called the Spiderhollow. The pit below swarms with her offspring.

Notable Places

The Parliament of Spiders

When great evil is afoot in Mirkwood, the Spiders gather. The word goes out in quivers of the web, and in the chittering night-speech of spider-kind. They come to this nightmare glade in the Heart of Mirkwood, and there they spin their parliament. A vast swathe of forest is shrouded in webs layered so thick they resemble pearlescent marble instead of silk. The Spiders weave towers and bastions, thrones and a great audience chamber where they gather.

The Old Oak

Every forest, no matter how great, began with a single tree. The Old Oak is older than Mirkwood, older than the Secondborn race of Men, older than the Misty Mountains. It is a gnarled, half-fallen old thing, almost as wide as it is tall. The Old Oak stands in the middle of an oak glade, supported by the vigorous branches of its offspring, like an aged king held up by his sons. Of all the trees in Mirkwood, it is the most awake, and can speak.

The oak is somewhere deep in Tyulqin's realm, and neither Elf nor man has spoken to the Old Oak since the Shadow returned after the Watchful Peace. No-one knows if the tree still stands, and, if it does, whose side it is on.

The Lost River

The Green River once flowed out of the Heart of Mirkwood, rolling out to the east to join the River Running some fifty miles past the end of the Long Marsh. Today, all that remains is a dry river bed. Something deep in the woods swallowed the whole river.

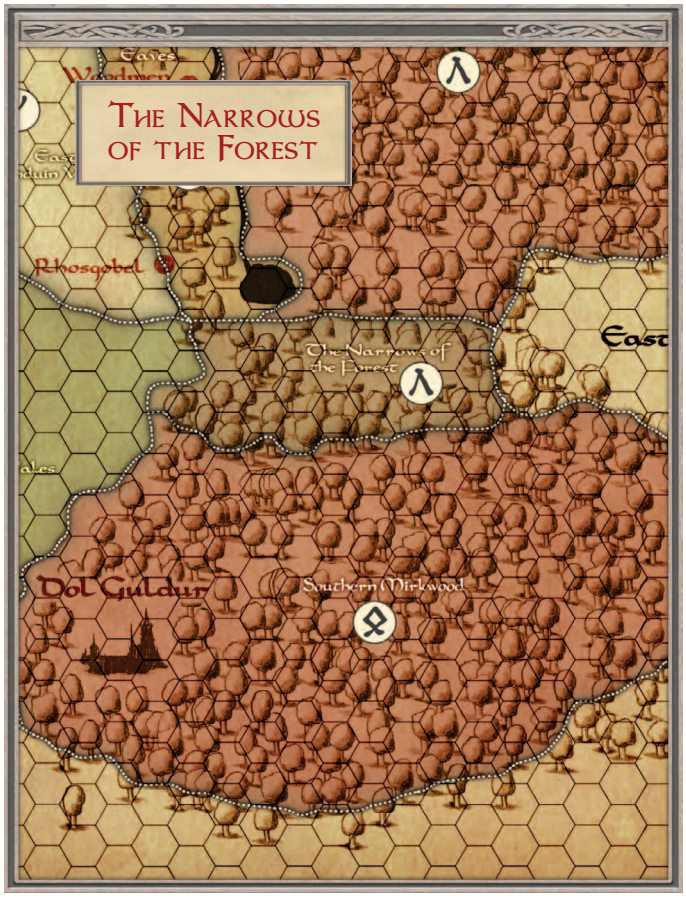
The Green River was the best way to navigate through the Heart of Mirkwood, as it ran from the Haunted Hills to the middle of the forest before turning east. The river was never large, and ran almost dry at the height of summer, but it never wholly stopped until the Year 2901.

King Thranduil suspects that some devilry of the Orcs in the Mountains of Mirkwood has blocked the river. Some travellers speak of dank fogs, new marshes and rotten trees in the Heart of Mirkwood, as though the Orcs have put the river to an ill purpose. If the lost river could be let loose once more, it would give the Elves a way to safely scout the deeper woods, for the river was ever a friend to the Free Folk.

The Narrows of the Forest

The Narrows of the Forest are testament to the strength — and hunger — of Men. Desiring better farmland, the Northmen of Rhovanion cleared a wide section of the forest over the course of generations. Unlike the Woodmen of today, few of these settlers saw the forest as anything other than a place of horror — or a source of firewood. Most built their halls not in the shelter of the forest, but on defensible hills and mounds. They cleared more and more of the forest and grew in strength and number, until an enemy came for them that no defensive wall or spike-clad hill could stop. The Great Plague hit them grievously, and in the following years they fell before enemies coming from the East. Their numbers dwindled and eventually they vanished from those lands, leaving only the Narrows and the East Bight as their legacy.

The East Bight is still mostly clear of trees. The soil there is rich and fertile, and many different tribes of folk have settled there and tilled it over the passing years.



The proximity of Dol Guldur means that they are inevitably forced to flee or bow to the Necromancer.

The Narrows themselves are little different from other areas of Mirkwood, although the Shadow lies heavily upon them. The terrain is flat and relatively free of obstacles, the trees do not grow so thickly as to block the way, and there are even old Elf-trails through the wood. If it were not for the pernicious influence of Dol Guldur, then the Narrows would be the easiest way to cross Mirkwood.

Wildlife

Spiders may be encountered in the northern reaches, in the hills south of the Black Tarn. The rest of the woods are home to wolf packs who hunt on both the west and east sides of Mirkwood. The western Narrows are thronged with millions of buzzing, blood-sucking flies. Large clouds of them rise up in summer to block out the sun. Travellers hoping to pass through the Narrows are inevitably tormented by these flies.

Inhabitants

No living men dwell in the Narrows. It is the dead who dwell here. The paths through the forest are haunted by Wood-wights. Whether these are the unquiet dead of the Northmen, or phantasms sent forth by the Necromancer, no-one is sure, but they guard the approach to Southern Mirkwood.

Notable Characters

Ceawin the Generous

Ceawin is chieftain of a tribe of men who once lived the West Nether Vales of Anduin. When word reached them that the Dragon was dead, Ceawin's father led them east, around the southern edge of Mirkwood and through the Brown Lands to the East Bight. There, they have settled, and begun to farm. Ceawin is close friends with the Woodmen of Woodmen-town and Rhosgobel, and intends to unite his people with them. After the fashion of the Woodmen, he has built his hall under the shadow of the trees of the Narrows, and intends to wed the daughter of an elder of Woodmen-town.

Radagast warned Ceawin to stay away from Southern Mirkwood, but the young chieftain is determined to bring prosperity to his people. Men conquered the East Bight before, and lived well for many years – they can do so again under his rule!

The Messenger of Mordor

The second of the three Nazgûl sent to Mirkwood is the Messenger. His mission is to let the will of the Dark Lord be known in Mirkwood, and to carry the orders of the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur to the Ghost of the Forest. The Messenger is the first of the Nazgûl to take the form of a rider dressed in black. His missions take him through the Narrows and then south across the Dead Marshes to the entrance to Mordor. He prefers the eastern route, as the western vales along the Anduin are too closely watched.

The Messenger has a growing network of spies in Mirkwood. Some serve him out of fear, others for gold, others because they hope to ally themselves with the winning side in the war to come. Not all of them know who or what they serve. He has some spies among the Woodmen, fewer among the Beornings, and many in Dale and Lake-town.

Notable Places

The Hall of Ghosts

The Northmen who lived in this region disappeared long ago. The only sign that they ever existed is written on the very land where they lived. How, then, can one of their halls still endure? Tales tell of two hunters who chased a wounded deer into Mirkwood. They got lost, and wandered cold and hungry for days until they came upon a great longhouse in a clearing.

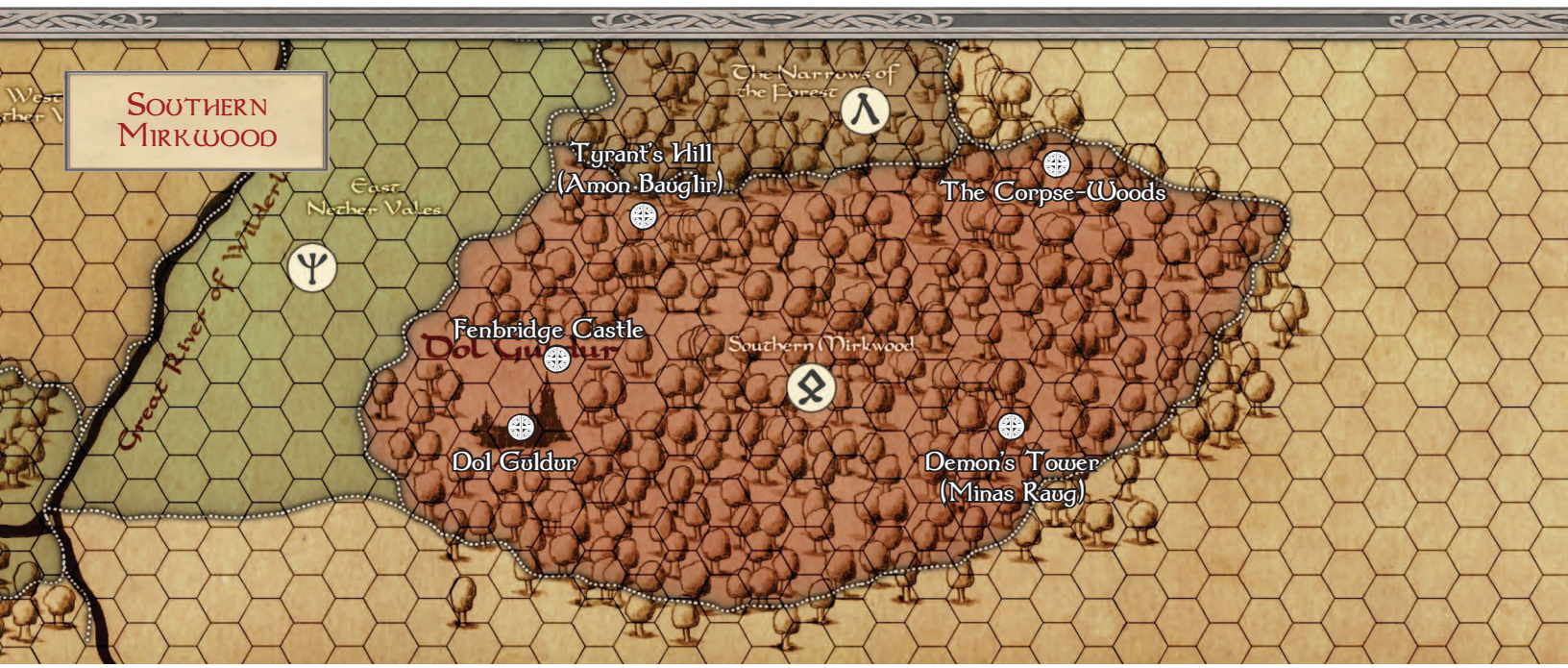
The house was clearly in good repair, with fresh turf on the roof and smoke rising from the chimneys. One of the hunters was alarmed, for he knew that no people lived in that part of the forest, and argued that they should leave. His companion chided him, and went inside. The first hunter lingered in the porch for a moment, and then he heard his friend screaming inside the longhouse, warning him to run and never look back.

Since then, other travellers have seen a hall where no building should be. The Hall of Ghosts can appear, it seems, anywhere along the edge of the East Bight, and usually is encountered by those in need of shelter or safety. What lies within the Hall, though, is a mystery, for no man has ever walked out alive.

Southern Mirkwood

Darkness dwelt for too long in Southern Mirkwood, and the whole forest carries its taint. Black firs grow tangled and twisted, their branches laden down with strands of old man's beard and black ivy. The mirk is darker here, so that no light penetrates the leaves and fogs even on the brightest days. The ground underfoot might be a sucking bog, or impassable broken terrain, or choked in thorns. Many of the trees themselves are dead, strangled by the poisons that leeched into the soil. Outside of the land of Mordor, there is no place under the sun where the Enemy holds more power.

The terrain is mostly flat, save for a low ridge of hills that run from west to east, rising to the southwest of Dol Guldur. A few streams run down these elevations, and their waters trickle off into the south to perish in the Brown Lands. The naked hill upon which Dol Guldur stands rises in the midst of a vast marshland. Once it was a small expanse of still waters that the Elves made more pleasant by building bridges that arched gracefully above the swamp. The bog spread for many miles since that time, and the servants of the Necromancer tore the bridges down, to replace them with crude stone walkways that today are covered in moss and slime. The Orcs left many marks in the woods too.



Parts of the forest were cut for firewood and timber, and these despoiled clearings are scattered through the middle part of the forest, linked by Orc-tracks.

The eastern region of the forest is as wild and untamed as the Heart of Mirkwood, but it is under the Enemy's thrall. There are no trails here, but the trees quiver and bend according to the Enemy's will. When war comes, the Orcs say that the trees will uproot themselves and march with them to crush the hated Elves. In the north-east lie more barrows and graves of the Northmen, now haunted by shades and evil spirits.

The forests to the southwest were once thinner and brighter than the rest of the wood, but the Enemy has warped the whole forest to be his fortress. Now, every part of Southern Mirkwood is forbidding and treacherous. Its reputation has spread far down the Great River, and now most people in the south believe that the whole forest must be equally horrific.

No discussion of Southern Mirkwood can neglect the mists, called the 'reeks' or the 'glooms' by the Woodmen. These thick fogs can cloak the whole forest in impenetrable dark cloud. They seem to spring up anywhere without warning or reason, but some say that all mists in Southern Mirkwood flow out from Dol Guldur itself. Under the fog, all things appear sinister and menacing, the branches of the trees reach out like skeletal fingers, and it is impossible to tell north from south, east from west or even up from down. Travellers driven mad by the fog are sometimes found broken at the foot of the trees they climbed in a desperate attempt to escape.

Wildlife

The woods are empty and silent. Wolves slip around the fringes of the wood, and there are still a few herds of deer in the deep woods, but little else lives in this region. The lowlands and marshes around Dol Guldur are home to serpents and snakes of all kinds, the largest and deadliest of which escaped from the pits of the fortress itself.

Black birds akin to the Gore-crows of the Long Marshes are common in the forest, especially along the borders of Southern Mirkwood. The Elves suspect that the Necromancer laid a spell on these birds, so they obey his commands and watch for enemies.

Inhabitants

The forest of Mirkwood is not much friendlier to Orcs than it is to anything that walks on two legs. But where the malevolence of the Dark Lord weighs the heavier, its servants thrive. When the Necromancer ruled, the Orcs dared go abroad by day as far as they went at night, protected as they were by the canopy of Southern Mirkwood and its glooms. Now that the White Council

has driven their Master out of his fastness, many have deserted the region in despair, but many more still hide there, waiting.

Not all the Dark Lord's minions are Orcs, though. The Necromancer counted many Men among his slaves, unfortunate souls who were attracted to Dol Guldur with threats and promises. Most of these folk slunk away into the night when the Necromancer abandoned them, to return to the lands of their origin to work their petty evils, but some remained in Mirkwood, wishing to reclaim Dol Guldur for their own.

Notable Characters

The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur

Three Nazgûl were sent to Mirkwood by Sauron in 2951, and the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur is their commander. Once a king of Men, he is second only to the Witch-king in malevolence, and is capable of more independent action than the other Ringwraiths. Of the three Nazgûl in Mirkwood, the Lieutenant is the most dangerous and the most cruel.

The Lieutenant's mission is twofold. First, he must rebuild the strength of Dol Guldur. The Dark Lord's long preparations for war have finally started, and while he is summoning all wicked creatures from his Dark Tower in Mordor, he needs to extend his reach to threaten the North and West. Sauron originally intended to set the Dragon of Erebor against the Woodland Realm, but now the situation has changed greatly. The Battle of Five Armies has reduced grievously the strength of Orcs and Wargs, and united the quarrelling Free Folk. The Dragon is dead, there is a King in Dale once more, and the Dwarven Kingdom under the Mountain is restored — and now even the Beornings and the Woodmen of Western Mirkwood are growing in number. The Lieutenant must end all this, starting with the friends of Radagast, his ancient enemy.

Second, the Lieutenant must search for the One Ring. Behind all his plans and schemes, Sauron is always seeking his lost treasure, as he cannot accept the thought that it might have been destroyed when it was taken from him long ago. So, if the Ring is lost, and if it has not been claimed by some Elf-King or mortal lord, then the Lieutenant will find it.

The Lieutenant remains in spirit-form while in Dol Guldur, speaking from the shadows as the Necromancer did. When he must go abroad, he is clad in an Easterling-forged suit of black armour.

Maghaz, Orc-Captain

Among the Orcs, it is generally the strongest that prevails. Those Orcs who demonstrate the greatest hatred and most dreadful wrath are placed in command of their lessers. The monsters are led by worse monsters.

Maghaz is an exception to this. To look at him, you would not think him very dangerous at all — he is small for an Orc, with a pot belly and one bleary-white eye and one red one. He is an old Orc from the Misty Mountains, whelped in the caves under Mount Gundabad many years ago, yet he has risen to command Black Uruks from Mordor. He triumphs through cleverness, not strength of arms. He's seen many campaigns, and watched many a stronger Orc fall to an Elf-arrow or the spears of the Woodmen, or be torn down by other Orcs. Maghaz has learned to play his fellow Orcs off against each other, and to ingratiate himself with the dark powers.

Five years ago, when the White Council attacked Dol Guldur, Maghaz was nowhere near the citadel. Neither was he leading the charge at the Battle of Five Armies.

No, Maghaz let younger, stronger Orcs bully their way to the front, while he took a lesser position, commanding the rear guard at Fenbridge Castle.

The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur recognises Maghaz's cunning and tactical skills, and has given him command of the Orc garrison in Mirkwood. Maghaz prefers to lead from the rear, so he sits at the Fenbridge and lets other Orcs die in his stead. (See also the *Monsters of the Wild* chapter on page 111).

Mogdred

Once, Mogdred was a warrior and hunter from Rhosgobel, green as the first leaves of spring. Orcs captured him in battle and carried him off to the dungeons of Dol Guldur. There, he chose to serve instead of facing the tortures of the pit. He rose swiftly in the Necromancer's favour, and became Captain of the Guard. He was clad in Orc-mail from head to toe, and given an ancient blade forged by those renegades called the Black Númenóreans. Mogdred was feared as the right hand of the Necromancer.

In truth, his role was to deceive, not to conquer. To maintain his disguise, Sauron could not send the Ringwraiths to do his bidding, nor could he reveal himself. Therefore, he used Mogdred as his mouthpiece among his servants, and as an envoy among his enemy.

When Sauron fled Dol Guldur, Mogdred was forsaken, left to command a fortress deserted of its defenders. From a high place, he spied the Wise approaching and fear overcame him. Angry at the Necromancer's betrayal, Mogdred fled Dol Guldur with a retinue of trusted followers. Today, he inhabits the tower upon *Amon Bauglir*, the Tyrant's Hill, and has gathered many warriors and fell beasts to his side, with the intent of creating his own kingdom in the wood. Whether he shall ally himself with Dol Guldur once more, or try to preserve his petty domain by allying with the Woodmen against his former masters is a question he has yet to answer.

Attribute level: 6
Specialities: Shadow-Lore, Mirkwood-Lore
Distinctive Features: Bold, Reckless
Relevant skills: Battle ♦♦♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦, Sword ♦♦♦
Endurance: 20

The Sorceress of Mirkwood

Her true name is Zimraphel. She is of the line of the Black Númenóreans from Umbar. While her kin fell into sloth and decadence, she studied the stars and the mystic arts, hoping to find a way to cheat death. Word reached her in the distant south of a powerful Necromancer in Mirkwood, and she sailed up the Anduin in a black boat to pledge her service to him. It amused Sauron to teach her sorcery, and she hoped that he would give her a Ring of Power. Now that the Necromancer is gone, she fled the wrath of the Wizards and took refuge in the Demon's Tower, in the far south-east of Mirkwood. So far, she has ignored all the entreaties of the Nazgûl to return to Dol Guldur, and plots instead to steal one of their Rings.

Little humanity is left in her. She retains the semblance of her mortal form, but her soul is withered and blighted. She knows more of the inner workings of Dol Guldur than any save the Nazgûl, but has no interest in aiding the Free Peoples. All she desires is a Ring...

Attribute level: 5
Specialities: Old-Lore, Shadow-Lore
Distinctive Features: Lordly, Secretive
Relevant skills: Lore ♦♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 20

Notable Places

The Corpse-Woods

The Northmen who cut the East Bight buried their ancestors in barrows on the edge of the wood, and planted a yew tree above each barrow. Today, the barrows are hollows amid the roots of towering trees, hidden unless you know which hollow goes deeper than the rest, leading down into the earth.

Sauron sent forth spirits from Dol Guldur to inhabit these barrows. The Wood-wights spring from this region, and from here they haunt the Narrows and block any incursions into the Necromancer's domain from the north.

Tyrant's Hill (Amon Bauglir)

A fortress stands upon a wooded rise on the edge of the wood, some fifty miles north of Dol Guldur. The Elves named the rise the Tyrant's Hill many years ago, for it was

from the keep that sits upon it that many raiding parties issued forth. The tower was built by Orcs, who hewed the stone out of the hillside and cut living wood from the forest to make it. By night, the howling of the Wargs can be heard for miles around.

The keep was seized shortly after the fall of Dol Guldur by Mogdred and his followers, who slew the garrison and claimed it for their own. The Tyrant's Hill is but a fraction of the size of Dol Guldur, but it is a greater fortification than any the Woodmen command, and from his high seat Mogdred can inflict terrible injury on his kinsfolk if he chooses. So far, he is content to demand tribute from the small settlements in the Nether Vales, but his cold heart turns ever north to Rhosgobel.

Demon's Tower (Minas Raug)

The Demon's Tower stands in the heart of a tangled thicket, its topmost battlements hardly taller than the surrounding trees. It is made of dark stone quarried in the Mountains of Mirkwood; every stone bears runes of power engraved by the lords of Dol Guldur. Attached to the tower are a walled bailey and several outbuildings. The Demon's Tower is Dol Guldur's eastern outpost, commanding the forest trail that leads south, but that is not its true purpose.

After they drove the Necromancer from Dol Guldur, the Wizards discovered that Sauron himself created the Demon's Tower for some sinister project. Its design mirrors that of the Tower of Spells atop the Hill of Sorcery itself, suggesting that Sauron built this tower to work some foul magic, possibly to call shades from beyond. Even among the Orcs, this is a place of terror, for none know what horrors may lurk in the chambers beneath the tower. The Sorceress of Mirkwood now rules the tower. She commands a small and unreliable garrison of Orcs, as well as a few human mercenaries from the south. Of late, scouts have seen strange lights in the upper windows of the tower, and Radagast fears the Sorceress intends to continue the vile work of Sauron.

Fenbridge Castle

Foul marshes surround Dol Guldur on three sides. The easiest way to cross these swamps is via the Fenbridge, a snaking line of orc-built crossings that run from hillock to hillock, and the only way onto the Fenbridge is through Fenbridge Castle. Fenbridge Castle is a sprawling, unplanned fortress; it started as a mere gatehouse, but has had innumerable other towers and bastions added on over the years. Fenbridge once supplied food and manpower to Dol Guldur. Maghaz commands Fenbridge Castle, in charge of a much reduced garrison.

Dol Guldur

There is a haunting beauty in ruin. Unlike Barad-dûr, which is a bastion of iron and suffering, Dol Guldur is graceful and pale, like a gibbous moon frozen in stone. The building glimmers with an unearthly, unwholesome light.

The description below is of Dol Guldur in 2947. Six years have passed since the White Council drove the Shadow from the citadel, and now Dol Guldur is mostly empty and silent. Over the course of *The Darkening of Mirkwood* campaign the citadel will be restored to its former strength, when the Ringwraiths return to their master's halls.

Even when Dol Guldur was unoccupied, it was never wholly abandoned. Orcs lurk in the dungeons, the Dead slumber uneasily in the moat, and other inhuman eyes watch from within the Hall of the Necromancer.

1. **The Moathouse:** The gates of Dol Guldur were forged of black iron and wound around with potent spells — but they were broken open when the Wise came. Despite this literal gaping hole in its defences, the Moathouse is sturdy and easy to hold. A row of murder-holes welcomes those who pass beneath its gate, and there are numerous concealed arrow-slits and murderous traps awaiting attackers.

   The Moathouse is the only way to enter Dol Guldur from the surface—there are numerous secret entrances to the Dungeons both inside and outside the walls.

2. **The Dead Moat**: This foul morass surrounds the Hill of Sorcery on all sides, and the only way across is a narrow stone bridge that leads from the Moathouse to a matching gatehouse and hence to the Outer Courtyard. The moat itself is a muddy hell of stagnant pools, concealed pits and poisonous fumes, but the

greatest danger lurks beneath the surface. The dead of Dol Guldur lie into the bog, and any living creature that steps in the mud is dragged down by dead hands and drowned. Orcs and Elves and Men uncounted lie here, their pale hands made strong as iron by the unyielding grip of death.

There are safe paths through the Dead Moat, trails that wind between the mass graves left by carrion-eating creatures, but no living man knows them. Leeches and, strangely, prodigiously huge snails live in the moat too.

3. **Outer Courtyard:** The wide outer courtyard is the marshalling-place for the citadel's defenders. Dol Guldur is often cloaked in fogs and noxious vapours that blot out the sun, shading the Orcs and Goblins from the light. The buildings surrounding the outer courtyard contain workshops, wolf dens, smithies and other preparations for war.

4. **Lower Keep:** The squat lower keep was home to the citadel's garrison and other lower-ranking servants and slaves. Most fled into the Dungeons when the White Council attacked, and the keep remains abandoned save for a few scavengers. The Lower Keep was built by Orcs, not Elves, and shows all the signs of being built by that horrid race — windowless walls, endless fetid chambers, and a stench of despair and suffering and hatred.

5. **Inner Gate:** The titanic inner gate of Dol Guldur was forged — or maybe carved, or even grown — from a black substance unlike any metal known to Durin's folk. Perhaps it is black bone, or wood treated with some alchemy to be tougher and stronger than steel. Sigils inlaid with stolen *mithril* speak of the doom that awaits any who trespass within these walls. The Inner Gate can only be opened by those who know the password or bear the proper token — forcing it open is impossible. During the White Council's attack on

the fortress, it was Saruman the White who opened the door. How he discerned the password is a mystery known only to the Wise. The Gates have remained open since then, for they are too heavy to move. Should the Necromancer or one of his servants return to Dol Guldur, then the first sign of their presence will be the closing of the Inner Gate.

6. **Inner Courtyard:** The Inner Courtyard was once the garden of the Elvenking. Twelve dead *mallorn* trees stand here in a circle, leafless and skeletal. Six statues were raised among them — two near the entrance, two at the door leading to the High Keep, and two at the Stairs of Woe. Each statue depicts a strange bird-headed figure seated on a hideous throne. Their jewelled eyes glitter as they watch for intruders.

   Passing between these statues is extremely difficult, requiring a Valour test against TN 16. This TN rises to 20 if Dol Guldur is occupied and its master commands the statues to wakefulness. If the test fails, whoever dwells in the fortress is made aware of the intrusion, and the companion cannot find the willpower to press on; he can try again only by spending a point of Hope. Should the Valour test fail with an , the would-be trespasser cannot spend Hope to try again, he gains a permanent Shadow point and suffers immediately from the effects of a Bout of Madness.

7. **High Keep:** The High Keep was home to the Necromancer's most exalted servants and spies. Inside, it is a palace, decorated with treasures stolen from the North-kingdom of Arnor during the wars with Angmar. The White Council searched the High Keep after their victory, but found little of note, suggesting that the keep was deliberately abandoned in advance of their attack. This was the heart of the web of spies, informants and agents who served Sauron, and the orderly removal of all those records means that his plans continue, co-ordinated from some other fortress.

8. **Stairs of Woe:** These stairs lead to the Hall of the Necromancer. Until the coming of the White Council, only the trusted servants of Sauron — and those prisoners who Sauron chose to doom personally — ever walked these stairs. Every step is wound around with spells of terror; for every step, the visitor endures a lifetime of pain and suffering. Those who climb the stairs must make three tests of either Wisdom and/or Valour, the first against TN 12, the second at TN 16, and the last at TN 20. A failed Valour test inflicts a loss of Endurance equal to the Target Number; a failed Wisdom test causes the trespasser to gain three points of Shadow.

9. **Tower of Spells:** From this tower, the Necromancer wrought his sorcery. Only Sauron ever entered this tower, and no-one knows what lies inside. At times in the past, unearthly lights glowed from within, and the night air carried strange fell voices that spoke in no tongue known in Middle-earth or across the sea. Some whisper that Sauron called forth beings from beyond the Doors of Night, and summoned things unknown.

10. **Tower of the Stars:** This was an observatory, used on the few nights when Dol Guldur was not shrouded in fog.

11. **Pits of Dol Guldur:** Before the Necromancer came, the Elvenking built wine cellars and treasure vaults beneath his hall, but under Sauron's direction, the underground chambers of Dol Guldur were extended a hundred-fold. There is more beneath the Hill than above it — endless Orc-warrens, dungeons where thousands of prisoners suffered, storerooms and barracks and foundries, charnel pits and torture rooms, secret passages and hidden chambers. The Dungeons run under the sodden moat and out into the surrounding swamps, so they are extremely damp and fetid. Some regions are flooded; others choked with luminescent mushrooms that spit poisonous spores.

12. **Hall of the Necromancer:** The seat of Sauron in Mirkwood. No living man knows what lies beyond the Threshold of this place. Even the Wizards dared not cross its gate — Radagast tried, and stumbled back as though blind. Saruman raised his staff, and cast forth a bright white light, but even that did not pierce the terrible darkness within. Still, they could sense that the Enemy had fled, like a flapping shadow flying East on the wind.

- monsters - of the wild

Wilderland is a vast region inhabited, or plagued, by a great number of creatures. From the green meadows of the Vales of Anduin to the depths of Mirkwood, danger is never far away from the paths trodden by adventurers.

Basilisks

Called *Sarnlug* by the Elves, and *Fágwyrm* by the Northmen, these lizards are said to be cast-offs from the Enemy's earliest attempts to make dragons. Most Basilisks are as large as boars, but they can grow much bigger. Their yellowish bellies drag on the ground as they waddle through the forest's underbrush.

Basilisk:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
40	3
Parry	Armour
4	4d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Special Abilities	
Hideous Toughness	Thick Hide
Hatred (Elves)	**Venomous Breath***

***Venomous Breath:** By spending a point of Hate, the serpent breathes out a cloud of poison. The cloud affects a number of enemies among those attacking the creature in close combat, equal to the creature's current Hate score. Those caught in the cloud must make a Protection test against TN 14 or be poisoned.

Basilisk Poison: A character poisoned by a Basilisk is slowly paralysed and falls to the ground after a number of rounds equal to his Body or Heart rating, whichever is lower, in addition to suffering from the normal effects of being Poisoned (see page 144 of the Adventurer's Guide). After one full day, the character may make a Valour roll against TN 14. If the roll succeeds, the poison wears off. Otherwise, the character is permanently frozen and will wither and die within a few months (Elrond Halfelven, the master of Rivendell, is said to know of an antidote).

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	4		14	Pierce *and* Poison
Notes				
The fangs of the basilisk drip with a venom so potent that even their breath is lethal to weaker creatures.				

Forest Goblins

The Orcs of Mirkwood are wiry, pale creatures, mostly inhabiting the caves under the Mountains of Mirkwood and haunting the ruins of Dol Guldur. Their long limbs and bony hands are surprisingly powerful, a characteristic that many enemies discovered too late.

When they leave their underground lairs they smear filth and mud over themselves, to better hide in the gloom of the forest. They are excellent climbers and trackers, and often clamber through the canopy instead of travelling along the ground. They have a special terror of Spiders, as Forest Goblins are one of the most common snacks for a hungry spider.

Forest Goblin:

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	Hate
10	2
Parry	Armour
2 +1 (buckler)	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Stone Spear	2
Jagged Knife	1
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Craven
Horrible Strength	**Mirkwood-dweller***

***Mirkwood-dweller:** While the creature fights inside Mirkwood its Parry score is doubled.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Stone Spear	4	10	12	Pierce
Notes				
The spears of Forest Goblins have wicked heads of stone that sometimes break (the spear breaks on an attack roll of 1).				

Gorgol, Son of Bolg

Gorgol is a young Great Orc, dreadfully strong but not yet grown to full size and power. What he lacks in might he makes up in cunning.

Gorgol, Son of Bolg:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
45	7/10 (see *the Scimitar of Azog*)
Parry	Armour
6	4d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Heavy Scimitar (2h)	4
Orc-axe	2
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	Hatred (Dwarves)
Great Size	Horrible Strength

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Heavy scimitar (2h)*	8	10	15	Break shield *and* Pierce
Orc-axe	5		16	Break shield

Notes

***The Scimitar of Azog:** This dread weapon is an heirloom of the Goblins of the North. A formidable blade in its own right, in the hands of a Great Orc, the Scimitar increases the bearer's Hate score by 3, and that of all his followers by 1.*

The New Great Goblin

The self-styled Greatest Goblin is a lumbering, huge Orc, consumed by an unquencheable thirst for revenge. He will go to any length to bring harm upon the dwellers of the Vales of Anduin, and especially the Beornings, but would go to greater lengths to preserve his own safety.

The New Great Goblin:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	Hate
60	8
Parry	Armour
3 +3 (great shield)	4d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Orc-axe	3
Broad-headed spear	2
Special Abilities	
Hideous Toughness	Hatred (Beornings)
Great Size	Craven

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Orc-axe	5		16	Break shield
Broad-headed spear	5	10	12	Pierce

Grim Hawks

Grim Hawks eat fish and smaller birds, as well as the worms and other insects that they dig out of the mud with their wickedly sharp curved beaks. They also eat carrion by placing one clawed foot on the corpse and tearing the flesh with their beaks. A hungry Grim Hawk can be brave enough to attack an armed man (and a flock may surround a group of men). The River-folk hunt Grim Hawks using arrows and stones; the birds taste terrible, but their beaks and claws are prized as decorations.

Grim Hawk:

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	Hate
10	4
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Beak	2
Claw	1
Special Abilities	
Savage Assault	Snake-like Speed

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Beak	4	10	16	Pierce
Claw	3		12	-

Notes

Beak: *Grim Hawks can deliver lethal blows with a quick swing of the beak.*

Claw: *The creature's talons are dangerous, but can rarely pass through the protection of a suit of armour.*

Hill-men of Gundabad

When the full light of the morning came no signs of the wolves were to be found, and they looked in vain for the bodies of the dead.

These Hill-men are wild warriors of the Black Hills of the Vales of Gundabad. Their ancestors served the Witch-king of Angmar, and they were given to the practice of sorcery. Today they do not serve the Shadow, but should their old master summon them, most of them would readily answer. The Hill-men can leave their bodies while sleeping in the form of spirit-Wargs, to join the wild wolves in their hunts.

Hill-man Warrior:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	3
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Spear	2
Short sword	2
Special Abilities	
Strike fear*	Fear of Fire

*The eyes of an enraged Hill-man flicker red in the dark, as the savage warrior howls bestially to chill the heart of his enemies.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Short sword	5	10	14	Disarm

Spirit-Warg:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	3*
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	2
Special Abilities	
Great Leap	Fear of Fire

*A Spirit-warg reduced to zero Hate retreats in the dark and then disappears.

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	3	10	14	Pierce

Hunter Spiders

Hunter Spiders are said to be the spawn of Tauler the Hunter and his sister Sarqin. They are large, hairy beasts, quicker and stronger and more aggressive than the rest of their kin. They do not spin webs, but lurk in the shadows and under piles of dead leaves until their unsuspecting prey comes near.

Hunter Spider:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
25	3
Parry	Armour
6	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Beak	2
Special Abilities	
Great Leap	Horrible Strength

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Beak	6		15	Poison
Notes				
These giant spiders do not inject poison in their victims using a sting, but with their beak, as does Tauler, their sire.				

Spider-poison: A poisoned character is paralysed and falls to the ground the round following the bite, in addition to suffering from the normal effects of being Poisoned (see page 144 of the Adventurer's Guide). The effects of poison wear off after one full day.

Maghaz, Orc-Captain

The castellan of Fenbridge, in Southern Mirkwood, is a wily creature who has learnt how to survive in the shadow of Dol Guldur: trust no one, never lead openly when you can plot in the dark, obey your masters, and when something goes wrong always find someone to put the blame upon.

Maghaz, Orc-Captain:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
14	5
Parry	Armour
3 +1 (buckler)	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Bent sword	3
Spear	2
Special Abilities	
Snake-like Speed	Craven
Hate Sunlight	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bent sword	4	10	12	Disarm
Spear	4	9	12	Pierce

Nagrhaw, Chief of the Wargs

...in the middle of the circle was a great grey wolf. He spoke to them in the dreadful language of the Wargs.

Nagrhaw, Chief of the Wargs is a Wolf Leader of unusual strength and cunning. He is always accompanied by a retinue of Wild Wolves, and sometimes Orcs.

Nagrhaw, Chief of the Wargs

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
22	6
Parry	Armour
6	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rend	2
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	Strike Fear
Savage Assault	Fear of Fire

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	6	10	14	Pierce
Rend	6		14	-

Wild Men of Mirkwood

These men are the descendants of Northmen who fled into the deep forests of Mirkwood and became corrupt and evil. They forgot all their lore, and now use carved wood and chipped stone instead of metal. They speak a barbaric tongue that is part a degenerate form of the Common Speech and part mimickry of the chirps and clicks of the Spiders.

The Wild Men worship both the Spiders of Mirkwood and the Necromancer, hoping that their cruel masters will spare them for another year. They have little contact with the Woodmen of the Western Eaves, and believe the Elves of the Woodland Realm to be horrible cold spirits of death.

Wild Man Warrior:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
15	3
Parry	Armour
3	1d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Spear	2
Bow	2
Special Abilities	
Hatred (Elves)	**Thrall (Spiders)****
Mirkwood-dweller*	

***Mirkwood-dweller:** While the creature fights inside Mirkwood its Parry score is doubled.

****Thrall (subject):** This creature is the slave or pet of another foe on the battlefield, referred to as its master. If the master is on the battlefield, then this creature may spend a point of Hate to become the target of an attack aimed at the master. However, if the master flees the battlefield or is slain, the creature loses one point of Hate and becomes Craven.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Bow	5	10	14	Pierce

Wood-wights

During the long centuries of the rule of the Necromancer, many evil spirits issued from Dol Guldur. Some found their way into the burial places of the Northmen, others inhabited the corpses of lost travellers and victims of the Spiders. Those who have seen Wood-wights and lived to tell the tale speak fearfully of shambling horrors composed of bones, leaf mould and fallen tree branches, and skulls that leered out of the darkness.

Wood-wight:

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
54	8
Parry	Armour
7	4d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 1
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Strangling Claws	3
Special Abilities	
Denizen of the Dark	Craven
Strike Fear (TN 16)	Fear of Fire
Horror of the Wood*	

The Wood-Wight's very high Endurance and Armour score reflect the thing's resilience to harm inflicted by corporeal weapons.

***Horror of the Wood:** If the creature is encountered in Mirkwood, all rolls of **Battle** made to gain Combat Advantages see their TN raised by the creature's Attribute Level (+5).

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Strangling Claws	5		16	-

The Children of Shelob

Far and wide her lesser broods ... spread from glen to glen, ... to Dol Guldur and the fastnesses of Mirkwood.

Tauler, Tyulqin and Sarqin are the spawn of Shelob the Great, the last child of Ungoliant, the weaver of darkness, ancient evil in spider-form. They hide deep inside the Heart of Mirkwood, their domain.

The Children of Shelob in Combat

The three spider-things are ancient, and care for their hideous hides. If any one of them is wounded in combat once, or reduced to zero Endurance, it breaks off the fight and attempts to flee.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Beak	Attribute Level	8	18	Poison
Stomp	Attribute Level		14	Knock-down

Notes

Beak: *These giant spiders inject poison in their victims using a beak.*
Stomp: *The Children of Shelob use their massive bodies as a crushing weapon.*

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Succesful Called Shot
Poison	The target has been Poisoned.*
Knockdown	The target has been Knocked down.**

***Greater Spider-Poison:** A poisoned character is paralysed and falls to the ground the round following the bite, in addition to suffering from the normal effects of being Poisoned (see page 144 of the Adventurer's Guide). The paralysis wears off after 1-6 full days (roll one Success die).

****Knockdown:** The target has been knocked down by the force of the blow. A character that is knocked down cannot choose to be 'knocked back' to lesser the impact of the blow that knocked him down. A character that has been knocked down cannot change his stance and will spend his following round recovering his fighting position, unable to take any further action that turn.

Sarquin, the Mother-of-All

The Spiders of Mirkwood revere Fat Sarquin as the Mother-of-All. While she certainly didn't spawn everything that goes on eight legs in the forest, she might well have given birth to half of them. Sarquin is a gigantic, bloated spider-thing, with multiple bulbous eyes that glow coldly in the dark.

Sarquin doesn't usually leave her abode above Spiderhollow, not even when her Spider servants fail to bring her food – in those cases, she stays her appetite on her numerous offspring.

Fat Sarquin:

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	Hate
90	8
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 3
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Ensnare	3
Beak	4
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Seize Victim
Thick Hide	Thing of Terror (TN 16)
Foul Reek	**Countless Children***

***Countless Children:** Sarqin's spawn are never far away. By spending a point of Hate, she may summon a number of Great Spiders equal to her current Hate score. These Spiders arrive the following round.

Tauler, the Hunter

Tauler is as large as a small elephant, yet he is nimble for his size. He can also be very patient and can lay in ambush for weeks, waiting for the perfect moment to attack. Not that he fears any opponent – his beak is hard as steel, and his hide can withstand the edge of the toughest of blades.

He has feasted on the blood of Elves and Men, and intends to do so for a long time to come.

Savage Tauler:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	Hate
60	8
Parry	Armour
8	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 4
Movement, 4	Custom, 3
Perception, 4	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Beak	5
Stomp	3
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Horrible Strength
Hideous Toughness	Strike Fear (TN 16)

Tyulqin, the Weaver

Tyulqin spins webs as black as the void between the stars, making her lair darker than the pits of Dol Guldur. Her malice is so twisted that the minds of mortals are simple toys to manipulate with phantoms and illusions. There aren't many heroes in Middle-earth who can dare defy the sight of this many-legged horror.

Black Tyulqin:

Attribute Level	
9	
Endurance	Hate
60	8
Parry	Armour
7	3d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 4	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Ensnare	3
Beak	4
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Seize Victim
Strike Fear (TN 20)	Dreadful Spells*
Webs of Illusion* **	**Many Poisons****

**Stupefy:* A hero who fails a Corruption check (TN 16) due to Dreadful Spells falls under the thrall of the spider, and walks straight into the nearest web. The companion loses his next action and is automatically captured as if targeted by a successful Seize Victim ability.

****Many Poisons:** When Tyulqin poisons a hero, instead of paralysing him she may choose to inflict one of the following effects (Loremaster's choice):

- **Despair:** The victim is counted as Miserable.
- **Drowning in Sorrow:** The victim must make a Corruption (TN 14) test each day to avoid gaining a Shadow point.
- **Weakened:** The victim is counted as Weary.
- **Sleep:** The victim falls unconscious.
- **Crazed:** The victim is treated as if having all the Flaws associated with their Shadow weakness.

*****Webs of Illusion:** Tyulqin can weave magical webs to deceive and bewilder her enemies. By spending a point of Hate, she can automatically ambush her foes (all companions are considered to be surprised).

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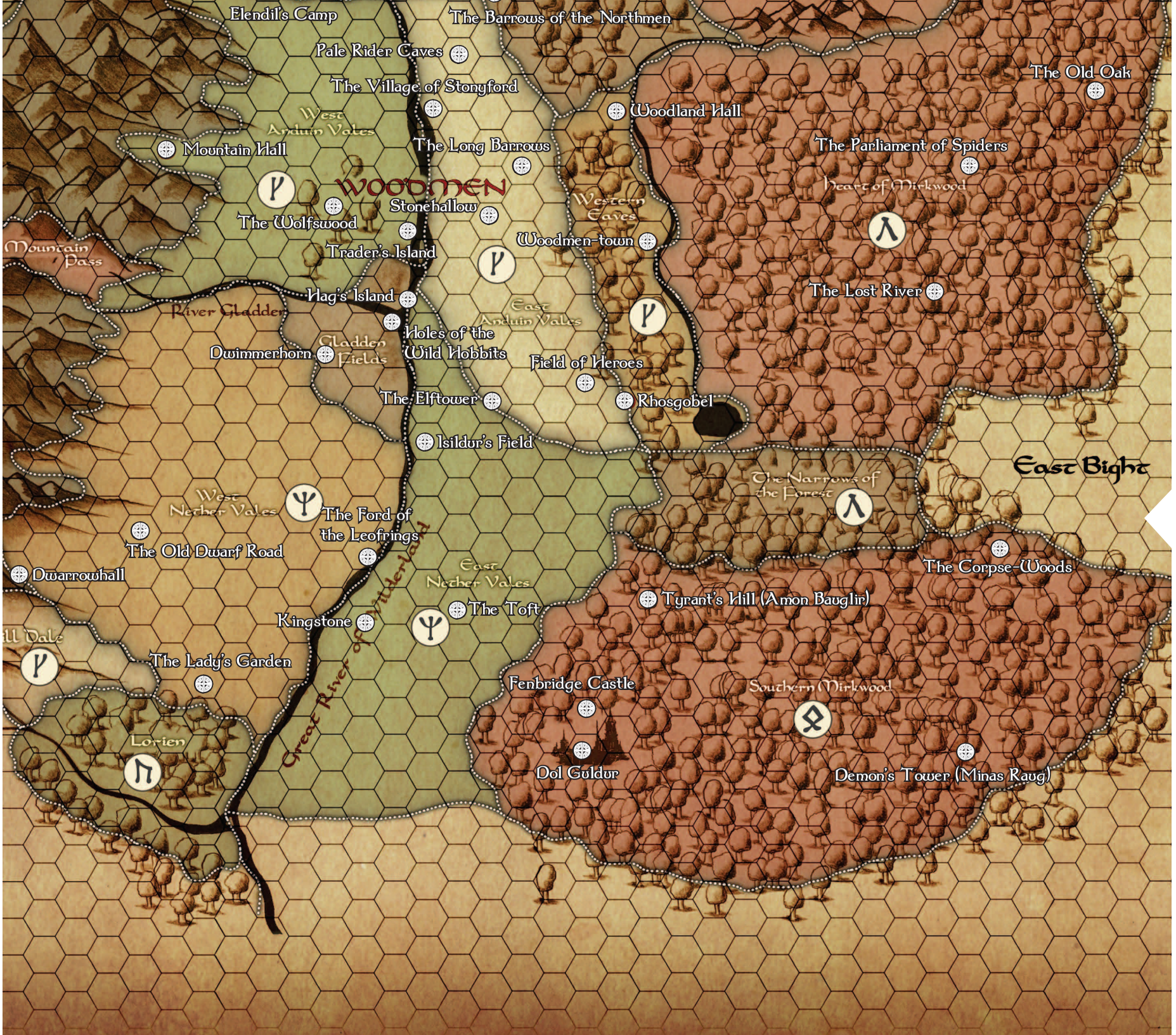
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